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ESSAYS AND RESEARCH

LAND OF THE TRINITY

A Study of Modern Christian Approaches to Hinduism

By

JOSEPH MATTAM

TPI

Bangalore
India

ESSAYS AND RESEARCH

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BY

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FOREWORD

The last decade has witnessed a growing interest among Christians and Christian Churches to understand and enter into dialogue with other great religions. What is more significant is that this exercise is coming to be seen and understood better as part and parcel of God's universal plan of salvation.

At the 1974 Synod of Bishops in Rome on Evangelization, the Fathers from Asia, as also those from Africa and the Near East, repeatedly called on the Church to enter into such dialogue. They asked for a discernment of the fruits of the Spirit among members of other religions which are neither a "tabula rasa" nor a spiritual desert and in fact are destined to find their fulfilment in Christ the Lord of history.

It is in this context that the pioneering work done in respect of Hinduism by the authors studied in this work assumes great historical significance. They were doubtless conditioned by the attitudes prevalent at the time but they nevertheless laid the foundations and paved the way for the on-going interest and the meaningful encounters of our day.

Hailing from Western lands, the authors were concerned to come to grips with Hinduism from within, whether through towering Indian philosophers or a study of the development of the idea of God or of religious experience or of the spirituality of bhakti or whether from a deeper understanding of the Incarnation and the Blessed Trinity.

It seems obvious that the tradition established by these great European scholars should not only be gratefully recognized but be assiduously continued and furthered by the Indians on whom the mantle has fallen.

One of the signs of the times, which represents a healthy advance on the past, is that the people of God in growing measure are keenly interested in the life and movement of the Spirit, in the search for religious experience in the contemplative and even monastic quest, perhaps in adapted form. Witness the notable popularity of the Prayer Seminars, and the marked success of the "living together" sessions in Varanasi, Trivandrum, Madras, Bangalore, Bombay, Poona, Aligarh, etc.

By the same token, the combined effort on the part of all major religious traditions to relate faith to action in the areas of

development and justice and in striving to remove the obstacles to peace likewise demands from the student of contemplative religion a deeper understanding of the mystery of Jesus Christ.

The time has come for the Church in India to make its specific contribution to the patrimony of the entire body of believers, and few will deny that the theology of inter-religious dialogue presents itself as one such challenging field for such activity. Doubtless we are still at the early stages of an Indian Christian theology. Hopefully, there will be a bright future.

The call to research has been sounded frequently in recent times. The sooner it is heard in "the cave of the heart" and becomes a reality, the nearer will be the day when the Church in India can respond to the challenge of the Gospel from within and in constant dialogue with the religious ethos of India and that too in today's changing environment. Quod faxit Deus!

Archbishop's House

New Delhi-110001

21st May, 1975

+Angelo Fernandes

Archbishop of Delhi

CONTENTS

Foreword	5
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Introduction	9
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CHAPTER I

"CHRISTIAN VEDANTA" (FATHER P. JOHANNNS)	17
--	----

I. The Principles of Johanns' Approach to Hinduism	20
II. Application of these Principles to Hinduism	26
III. Summary and Evaluation	34

CHAPTER II

THE ÉLAN OF HINDU SPIRITUALITY (PROF. O. LACOMBE)	44
--	----

I. The Meaning of Encounter of Religions according to Prof. Lacombe	45
II. The 'Difficulties' in Meeting Hinduism	49
III. Professor Lacombe and the élan of Hinduism	50
IV. Summary and Evaluation	62

CHAPTER III

THE INCARNATE WORD, EXEMPLAR OF RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER (DR J.-A. CUTTAT)	74
--	----

I. East-West Encounter	76
II. Contrast and Convergence	80

III. The Christian 'Assumption'	86
IV. Summary and Evaluation	101

CHAPTER IV

CHRIST, THE FULFILMENT OF THE RELIGIOUS QUEST (PROF. R.-C. ZAEHNER)	111
I. Development of the Idea of God	117
II. The Idea of Salvation	123
III. Christ, the Fulfilment of the Religious Quest	131
IV. Summary and Evaluation	135

CHAPTER V

INDIA "LAND OF THE TRINITY" (ABBÉ JULES MONCHANIN)	144
I. Christianisation of India	145
II. Monasticism and Encounter	151
III. The Blessed Trinity and Encounter with Hinduism	157
IV. The Blessed Trinity, Fulfilment of Hinduism	162
V. Summary and Evaluation	169
CONCLUSION	180
BIBLIOGRAPHY	189

INTRODUCTION

The declaration by the representatives of Bishops from all over the world gathered in the Synod in 1974 is the latest in a series of official and semi-official expressions of the change of attitude of the Catholic Church towards other religions. The Bishops declared: "Confident in the Holy Spirit's action which overflows the bounds of the Christian community, we wish to further dialogue with other religions which are not christian, thus to achieve a deeper understanding of the Gospel's newness and of the fulness of Revelation..."¹ In India the changed attitude of the Church was briefly expressed by the All India Seminar of the Church in India, in one of its Resolutions: "The age of polemics is past; today we cultivate courtesy, kindness and confidence because of what God has given us and our neighbour in Christ"² This resolution made by the representatives of the Laity, Clergy, Religious and Bishops of the Catholic Church in India clearly marks the passing from one era of her history to another. The spirit of this era has been carried on and further developed at the International Theological Conference at Nagpur in 1971 and in the All India Consultation held at Patna in 1973. In various seminars and meetings held during the past few years the Church has become more and more aware that she is called to be a partner in dialogue with other believers and non-believers in a search of "an ever fuller realisation of the Ultimate Mystery." She manifests an increased openness and is ready to enter into communion and collaboration with men of other faiths or of no faith. The C.B.C.I. commission for dialogue is organizing meetings all over the country to prepare the local Churches for dialogue with other religions. Theologians in India are becoming increasingly aware of the need of creative theological thinking and of hastening the process of Indianization. The Church in India, then, following the pattern of the universal Church, is definitely entering into a new era of her history.

At this moment of transition it is but proper to acknowledge and appreciate the efforts made in the past to bring about this change in the Church. What may now seem the most natural attitude for the Church was not reached without great struggle. Those who initiated the movements which led to the present period met often with opposition. Their 'unsuccessful' attempts have however helped the Church to become what she is today. In

this study our intention is to examine some of the efforts made by some non-Indian Catholic scholars to bring about this change in the Church. We limit ourselves to those whose main concern was the rapprochement of Christianity with Hinduism.

Our study may be viewed from another angle as well. Along with the changes in the attitude towards other religions, owing to decolonization and a growing sense of nationalism, there is also an increasing awareness of the identity of the local ecclesial communities. They begin to appreciate better their right place in the universal Church and their responsibility for other local Churches. Even though there is some opposition in some places to foreign missionaries, their presence in the missions is seen as an expression of the universality of the Church, of the concern each Church has for every other local Church. Our study then may be taken as an appraisal of one of the contributions made by the European Churches to the Indian Church.

It is necessary, however, to place the theme we study in its proper historical context. Only in the context of the general East-West encounter and in the light of the attitude of the universal Church to other religions in the 19th and early 20th centuries can the attitude of the Church in India be understood. We may point out three major attitudes which characterised the relation of the Church and of Europe to non-Christian religions and eastern cultures.

The first is what Dr. Cuttat calls a *Wertblindheit*, a blindness to the values of religions and cultures other than one's own. It resulted in an attitude of polemics and exclusivism, based on a one-sided appreciation of one's own religion and culture and the ignorance of those of others. Missionaries, with some exceptions,³ followed a theology which, owing to a very narrow and exclusivist interpretation of the axiom: *extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, believed that the eternal salvation of 'infidels' depended on conversion to Christianity and baptism. This attitude was found, for example, even in the beginning of this century in *Maximum Illud* of Benedict XV who expressed the aim of missionary activity as "to bring light to those dwelling in the shadow of death and to open the way to heaven to those hurrying to destruction".⁴ Given the conviction that the followers of non-Christian religions were "hurrying to destruction", it is quite understandable that missionaries did not attempt to learn the spiritual teachings of the people to whom they had to preach

the Word of God, but tried rather to refute and destroy them. Besides, there was a deplorable confusion between culture and Christianity, or more precisely between western culture and Christianity. Christianity had become so much identified with its expression in the West that another expression of it could not be conceived. But whatever may have been the shortcomings of the missionaries; they succeeded in 'planting' the Church in many parts of Asia and their handing on of Christ's teaching has not remained without effect.

Another attitude that gained currency in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries among pioneers of Orientalism may be called descriptive, pragmatic or scientist. Thanks to the linguistic developments one was able to 'understand' Asia, but the Europe that Asia encountered was a Europe on the way to dechristianisation. Orientalists like Max Müller and Sylvain Lévi were humanists with an open mind on the 'horizontal' plane, but closed to the 'vertical', owing to a positivist philosophy which dispensed with the supernatural. Scientism may thus be considered part of the beginning of secularism. Understandably the 'spiritual' East refused to yield to those who approached it with an *a priori* denial of everything beyond the observable and the measurable. The error of scientism was not in making abstraction of the transcendent order while it analysed the order of immanence—that would have been legitimate—but in denying transcendence in the name of science. Orientalism, however, so long as it remains within the field of description can render excellent service to an East-West encounter of religions.

If at one extreme we have polemics and opposition, at the other we find syncretism. Syncretism in a religious sense means "a mixing of inharmonious, conflicting religious elements".⁵ It holds an "essential unity" of all religions at a "higher metaphysical plane", at the level of an Absolute beyond all gods, and sees all conflicting "truths" of religions as merely different expressions of the same Reality. Its exponents like Frithjof Schuon and René Guénon try to 'iron out' all differences between religions, maintaining that they are only apparent, and valuable only on a lower level. Religious truths which are in fact essentially different, they try to present as really equivalent and interchangeable; and in Hinduism they find a welcome partner. The syncretic tendency is not scientifically serious because it ignores the real existing differences and the opposing claims of different

religions, and sees only the similarities. From the christian point of view it is unacceptable because of the Church's certain and absolute claims like the uniqueness of Christ, but it has a value in its desire for universalism.

In the beginning of this century there emerges a tendency different from opposition and syncretism and even from a merely scientific approach, a new positive religious attitude which regards other religions not merely as something to be tolerated but as containing positive values for Christ and His Church. The pioneers of this new attitude were faced with serious challenges. When the triumphalist, exclusivist and conquering spirit still prevailed in the thought of many, to speak of positive values, say, in Hinduism, was to court trouble. The words of Brahmabandhav Upadhyay aptly describe the prevalent attitude in India at the beginning of this century. Though not referring to Catholic missionaries, what he wrote about christian missionaries is enlightening: "sectarian missionaries for nearly half a century have been labouring under the delusion that the more it can be shown that the hindu Scriptures are so many lies, the more rapid will be the propagation of Christianity in India. Hence the uncharitable attempt on all sides to trample and crush everything hindu...Educated India has been thoroughly estranged and she looks upon Christianity as a destroyer not as a fulfiller and perfecter of what is true and good in the country..."⁶ But the danger of syncretism was also real. Given such a background, we can appreciate the courage and dedication of men like Brahmabandhav and Johanns.

A Bengali convert, Brahmabandhav Upadhyay claimed that Christ had come to fulfil not only the religions of Israel but also the religions of India. He considered Christianity as the fulfilment of Hinduism—a thought that became popular with the book of J.N. Farquhar, *The Crown of Hinduism*. Among the catholic missionaries Fathers W. Wallace, P. Johanns and Dandoy were among the first to develop the fulfilment theory and work out its consequences. Our study begins at this point of history.

We are concerned in this study with the approaches to Hinduism by European catholic Orientalists, missionaries or others from the time of Johanns onwards. The choice of authors has been limited in many ways. First of all we have confined ourselves to scholars of non-Indian origin and to catholics, though we are not unappreciative of the magnificent work accomplished

by members of other Churches.⁷ Secondly, we have taken only those catholic scholars who we feel have made some positive contribution to the field of encounter of religions over and above a scientific and objective presentation of Hinduism. Even in this limited field we were obliged to select. If we have chosen from among the many missionary scholars Father Johanns and Abbé Monchanin, it is not only because of the originality and value of their contribution to the hindu-christian meeting, but also because they seem to personify two major trends, the intellectual-doctrinal approach and the contemplative-monastic approach, to one or the other of which most missionaries would subscribe though not in precisely the same way. The former approach is less appreciated today, while the latter is more in vogue and there are many important proponents of such an approach, for example, Monchanin's companion and friend Swami Abhishiktananda (1910-1973), Bede Griffiths, Francis Acharya and others. But for their basic inspiration these men are indebted to Monchanin and their approaches are not basically different from his. At the time of the composition of this book Abhishiktananda was still alive. He attained his final *samādhi* on December 7th, 1973. It would have been only proper to add a chapter on him, to evaluate his great contribution to hindu-christian dialogue. As it is not possible now, I shall refer the reader to the articles published in a special issue of the *Clergy Monthly*, December, 1974.

From among non-missionary scholars we have included these names: R.C. Zaehner, O. Lacombe and J.-A. Cuttat. The late Professor R.C. Zaehner was one of the most eminent Orientalists and experts in the Comparative Study of Religions in the English speaking world. Among the French, Professor O. Lacombe has made a greater contribution than any other. Dr. J.-A. Cuttat is perhaps not so great an expert in Hinduism, but his contribution to the field of dialogue cannot be disregarded. Incidentally, these three have been Consultors to the Roman *Secretariate for Non-Christians*. There are both in the English and French speaking world other scholars of distinction like L. Renou, J. Gonda, M. Eliade and Filliozat, but their work has been mainly academic and they have done little from the point of view of hindu-christian encounter. The same can be said of German scholars who have contributed very much to the study of Hinduism; even a scholar like P. Hacker does not come within our compass, as he

has written very little on the aspect we intend to examine.⁸ We are quite conscious of the limitations of this selection, but limits there had to be!

Each of the five authors we have chosen focusses his attention on one or other aspect of Hinduism. If one is attracted by the philosophical systems, another is interested in the monastic life; one looks to the advaita trend, another to the bhakti trend and the Gita. They see Christ and the Blessed Trinity as the fulfilment of Hinduism though as we shall see later they do not limit themselves to a one-sided view of fulfilment. Their writings cover a wide range of human thought and interest: philosophy, mysticism, missionary apostolate, comparative study of religions etc. What we propose to do in this study is to expose the views of these authors as completely and objectively as possible and evaluate some of the theological principles implied in their work.

However, it is not without some hesitation that one starts a study of European scholars of Hinduism after reading the opinion of Ananda K. Coomaraswami which is shared by many Indians today. He writes:

Although the ancient and modern Scriptures and practices of Hinduism have been examined by European scholars for more than a century, it would be hardly an exaggeration to say that a faithful account of Hinduism might well be given in the form of a categorical denial of most of the statements that have been made about it alike by European scholars and Indians trained in our modern sceptical and evolutionary mode of thought.⁹

If we shared this opinion totally, this study would have been both insincere and unnecessary. But though we grant willingly that the understanding of a religion by a convinced believer of another religion can only have a limited value, we hold that many of the expositions and interpretations by European scholars are valuable contributions to an understanding of Hinduism, though one need not agree with all that they say.

I should like this study, even though limited in its scope, to be considered a homage to the heroic missionaries and Oriental scholars who have devoted themselves either out of missionary interest or 'intellectual charity' to the study of Hinduism and other religions, at a time when Indian Christians themselves, whatever the reasons may have been, with rare exceptions were

little or not at all interested in these religions. Simultaneously, this is intended as a grateful acknowledgement of the contribution of the European Churches to the Indian Church.

* * *

We did not deem it necessary to use diacritical marks for proper names (like Sankara, Ramanuja and others, Bhagavad Gita, Rig Veda...), and Sanskrit words which are commonly found in English dictionaries (avatar, upanishads, vedanta, bhakti etc.) We had planned to use diacritical marks only for the more rare words. But it is not easy to find presses suitably equipped with all diacritical signs. Readers are kindly requested to overlook lacunae or errors on that point.

I would like to express my deep gratitude to Frs. J. Pütz, C.M. Cherian and J. Hughes for painstakingly correcting the manuscripts, Fr. M. Dhavamony for guiding this work and many others who have helped me in one way or another.

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23, Raj Niwas Marg,
Delhi - 110054.

FOOT NOTES

Introduction

1. "Declaration of the Synodal Fathers", *L'Osservatore Romano*, 7 nov., 1974, p. 3. no. 11.
2. *The Church In India Today*, All India Seminar, Bangalore 1969. C.B.C.I. Centre, Delhi, Resolutions, p. 257.
3. We may refer to the English Jesuit Thomas Stephens (arrived in Goa in 1571) who grasped the importance of popular narrative poems as a means for reaching the hearts of the people and composed the *Christian Purana* in Marathi; to the well known Roberto de Nobili, S.J. and to the less known Constanzo Giuseppe Beschi, S.J. (1680-1747). For the efforts made to study Hinduism by missionaries in the 17th and 18th centuries, see G. Gispert-Sauch, S.J., "Early Hindu-Christian Encounter", in *Clergy Monthly*, 32 (1968) 230-231. For the following paragraphs, cf. J.A. Cuttat, *Experience chrétienne et spiritualité orientale*, Desclée, 1967, 65ff.
4. *Acta Apostolicae Sedis*, 11 (1919) 446.
5. H. Kraemer, "Syncretism as a Religious and Missionary Problem", in *The International Review of Missions*, 43 (1954) 253-273, quote, p. 258.
6. *Sophia*, (Jan 1895) 4.
7. For the excellent work done by Christians of other churches, cf. R. Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian Theology*, Madras, 1969; Kaj Baago, *Pioneers of Indigenous Christianity*, Bangalore, 1969.
8. Paul Hacker has already published three articles on the question of encounter of religions. Cf. *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*, 54 (1970), 161-185, 253-278, 55 (1971) 81-97. The fourth article, he once told me, would be about Hinduism. He considers his own approach similar to that of Cuttat.
9. *Hinduism and Buddhism*, Philosophical Library, New York, (n.d.) 3. Cf. also the remark of Dr. Lokesh Chandra who at the International Academy of Indian Culture, Delhi, said: "All that the Europeans have done during the last hundred years of their studies is to distort our cultural fabric and split it. They have understood the external details..." quoted by Dom Aelred Graham, in *The Tablet* (16 Jan. 1971) 64.

CHAPTER I

'CHRISTIAN VEDANTA' (FATHER P. JOHANNES, S.J.)

Introduction

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries the missionary activity of the Church in India followed mainly two trends: a 'direct missionary apostolate' and an 'indirect apostolate.' The 'direct apostolate' of preaching and spreading the Gospel message and of 'planting' the Church in indigenous soil resulted in many conversions; the 'indirect apostolate' among high caste hindus and muslims through various educational activities brought many into contact with Christianity. But in either case the missionaries remained without any deep contact with genuine Hinduism, for in the first type, the work was primarily among the low castes and the 'outcastes'; in the second, though among caste Hindus, the contact was hardly on a level which required a deep knowledge of their religion. To the missionary who was concerned with the preaching of the Gospel the work of assimilating the hindu thought did not seem as urgent as other obligations of the apostolate.

1. *Brahmabandhav Upadhyay*

It was in such a context that a great son of India, Bhavani Charan Banerji, later to be known as Brahmabandhav Upadhyay appeared on the scene.¹ He has been described as "the greatest Indian that ever found his way to Christ"² and it is said that probably all the modern attempts at adapting Christianity to Hindu thought and needs are to a great extent inspired by his example. Hence a few words on him would be in place even though we are chiefly concerned with European Orientalists.

Brahmabandhav was born in 1861 of a Brahmin family in Bengal. He was a disciple of Kesab Chandra Sen and a friend of Vivekananda and Rabindranath Tagore with whom he founded Shantiniketan. From K.C. Sen and Kali Charan Banerji, Brahmabandhav's uncle, he came to know Christ as the great Guru and in 1891 he was baptised by a Church of England clergyman and in the same year became a roman catholic. Ever since his

conversion, he writes, "my mind has been occupied with the one sole thought of winning over India to the Holy Catholic Church".³ In the early years after his conversion he was opposed to Hinduism, but eventually he realised that the vedanta which he used to consider as pantheism⁴ could become a vehicle of Christian theology. He was convinced that the theism of the vedanta was eminently adapted to explain the mysteries of the christian Faith to the Hindu. It is instructive for us to consider briefly the basic principles which guided his approach to Hinduism and his own theology, which however we shall not develop here.

a/ *We are hindu-catholics*: The Swami held that just as Christianity is different from europeanism and european thought, so hindu thought is different from hindu religion.⁵ Hinduism is both *Samāji Dharma* and *Sādhan Dharma*. *Sādhan Dharma* is of the individual and its object is *sādhan* and *mukti* (salvation) and has no relation to society; whereas *samāj dharma* denotes social customs and a way of life. He held that an Indian can be a christian by faith and a hindu in customs and social belongingness. Hence he called himself a hindu-catholic. "By birth we are hindu and we shall remain hindu till death. But as *dvija* (twice born) by virtue of our sacramental rebirth we are catholic....We are *hindu-catholic*".⁶ The conviction that he was a hindu-catholic became stronger as years went by and to all appearances he lived like a hindu and even underwent the *prāyas-citta* ceremony prescribed by Hinduism for hindus returning from abroad. Considering Sarasvati as a symbol of learning and art, he allowed Sarasvati worship to his pupils at the Sarasvat Aayatam. His insistence on remaining a Brahmin till death did not weaken nor diminish his attachment to Christ and to his Church. Since the name 'christian' had come to mean one who eats meat, wears trousers and has become thoroughly westernised, he did not like to be called a christian. In spite of all this his friends and Anirnananda assure us that he remained a catholic to his death, though he was cremated according to the hindu rites.⁷

b/ *Vedanta and Christianity*: A second conviction that underlies the thought and action of Upadhyay is that the vedanta must do the same service in India as Greek philosophy did in Europe. He attacked the westernisation of Christianity in India and held that the 'foreign clothes of catholic faith'⁸ have prevented the hindus from perceiving the universal character of the Church which is not confined to any race or country but is meant

for all mankind. He argued that the "Scholastic garb" of the christian doctrine was ill-suited to an intellectual hindu and hence the christian belief must be expressed in and through the vedanta philosophy. Hence he insisted that the missionary should "instead of vilifying Hinduism" find out truths from it by study and research.⁹

c/ *Monasticism and Conversion of India*: A third conviction of his was that if India had to be converted it had to be through monasticism. He himself became a sannyasi and donned the saffron garb. His plans to establish an Indian Ashram at Jabalpur could not materialise owing to the opposition of the Church authorities.¹⁰ Yet he held on to the belief that India needed itinerant missionaries who would be thoroughly hindu in their mode of living; they should wear the yellow sannyasi garb and remain strict vegetarians and they should be well versed in Sanskrit.

As to the theology of Brahmabandhav we may say that he tried to express his thomistic understanding of the faith in Christ by means of the vedanta categories. His hymns to the Incarnate Logos and to the *Saccidānanda* are positive contributions to an Indian christian theology.¹¹ In conclusion we may say that the great enterprise undertaken by him has yet to be completed. He opened a way to present Christ to India: its potentialities still remain to be explored. His call however has not been altogether left unheeded, as we shall see presently.

2. *Father Johanns and The Light of the East*

Whatever may have been his immediate success or failure it is clear that Brahmabandhav's writings did inspire a group of young missionaries of Calcutta to view their missionary activity from a new perspective. It was thanks to his inspiration and that of Fr. William Wallace that an enterprising review, *The Light of the East*, was started in Calcutta in 1922 by Frs. G. Dandoy and P. Johanns in collaboration with Animananda, a disciple of Upadhyay.

Before we look more closely at *The Light of the East*, a word on Father Johanns. He was born in Luxembourg in 1882. After his priestly formation as a Jesuit, he studied Sanskrit for four years in Brussels and then two years at Oxford where he worked on the *Philosophic System of Sankara* for his B. Litt. He came to India in 1921. Besides teaching philosophy at St Xavier's College, Calcutta, he worked with Father Dandoy on *The*

Light of the East where he developed his major work: 'To Christ through the Vedanta.' In 1939 he had to return to Belgium owing to ill-health and died there in 1955. Father Johanns became an Indian at heart and delved deep into the metaphysics and religious tradition of India. Even though a great scholar, he remained a missionary and wished to speak to hindus from within their own culture and religion. His knowledge of Hinduism was recognized even by hindu scholars. The late professor of Sanskrit at the university of Calcutta, Shri Harichandra Bhat-tacarya, after a careful study of the articles in *The Light of the East* by Fr. Johanns, says: "to those...who have not read the *Vedanta Sāstra* in Sanskrit, these articles will prove of the utmost usefulness.... These scholars truly deserve congratulations from us".¹² The major work of Father Johanns is his series of articles in *The Light of the East*: 'to Christ through the Vedanta'.¹³

3. *The Aim of Johanns*

The general policy of *The Light of the East* reveals to a certain extent the attitude of Johanns. We read in the first editorial: "What we...wish...to do is...to help India...to know and understand Jesus.... We have no intention to put out the existing lights. Rather we shall try to show that the best thought of the east is a bud that fully expanded blossoms into Christian thought".¹⁴ India was not to be led into something foreign to her heart but she had to be assisted to "become fully herself by pointing out to her her true ideals, showing her the way to realize them".¹⁵ In 1925 the editors wrote again that their policy would remain unchanged and that they would go on "acknowledging truth, goodness and beauty wherever it is found". We may also refer to the opinion of an eminent Orientalist Louis de la Vallée Poussin, who praised the efforts made by Fathers Dandoy and Johanns "to show how we can and must logically pass from the vedanta to Christianity".¹⁶ Briefly, therefore, the aim of Johanns and of *The Light of the East* is 'missionary', to announce Christ to India and to lead her to Christ through a new approach.¹⁷

I. THE PRINCIPLES OF FATHER JOHANNS' APPROACH TO HINDUISM

What we propose to do in this chapter is to expose briefly the principles underlying the approach of Johanns to Hinduism

and discuss them. Then we shall present a small example to show how these principles are found in the 'system' he proposes. A profound study of the history of the Church and of the riches of Hinduism led Johannis to the conviction that following the example of the early "teachers of the Church" and of St Thomas, we can and must construct a philosophical system "akin to Thomism" with the various positive doctrines contained in the different vedanta systems. The doctrine of *creatio-ex-nihilo* would enable us to achieve such a synthesis. For Hinduism is the best *praeparatio evangelica* among the 'natural' religions and it would find its fulfilment only in the religion of Christ.

1. *Hinduism is the best 'natural' praeparatio evangelica and it finds its fulfilment in Christ*

Concluding his chapter "Gathering the Fragments", Johannis says "we cannot but conclude...without expressing our admiration of the vedanta as perhaps the best among the natural Religions and therefore as the best foundation for the supernatural structure of Christianity".¹⁸ Years of study and meditation had convinced him that the long religious, spiritual and doctrinal history of Hinduism was an authentic *praeparatio evangelica* and that it would find its fulfilment in Christianity. For hindu philosophy is more 'religious' than the greek philosophies used by the Fathers of the Church. The history of India's quest for God through the centuries witnesses to her rich and valuable intuitions on God and his workings in the life of men. Hence Johannis concluded that Hinduism, "the most searching quest in the natural order of the Divine that the world has known"¹⁹ was prepared better than any other for the light of Christ.

Today one might object to calling Hinduism a 'natural religion' but it is well to remember that, writing in the earlier part of the twentieth century, Johannis follows the terminology of his time when all non-christian religions were considered 'natural' that is, within the sphere of man's capability, a fruit of his yearning for God. What is remarkable is that in spite of the theology of his time Johannis frequently refers to the possibility and existence of grace in Hinduism.²⁰

It is one of Johannis' convictions that "Hindus will find Christ if they find themselves fully",²¹ that their natural development is leading them to Christ: not as something that is added from without, but as the answer to their aspirations, freely given

by God. The heart of India, Johannis holds, is after Christ. "India wants a human God, but its systems do not give to it that human God either in Brahman or in Krishna".²² The great delight hindus take in Krishna who is "so much like an Indian boy" and who is at the same time called "the Lord", shows us that what India yearns for is a "God as human as possible and a man as divine as possible." This ideal of a God-Man, of a God of love is fully realized only in Christ who on the cross, which is the "symbol of that love that loves itself away", manifests India's ideal of self-sacrificing love. This Christ of the Cross does not come in as an intruder from outside, but it is to Him that the very élan of Hinduism tends.

Johannis considers fulfilment also from another aspect. He believes that an Indian theology would bring its own contribution to christian thought in general.²³ This aspect however does not receive much attention from Johannis. The idea is expressed once in the editorial of the *LE*: "The mystic Christ...will not be completed until it has bound to itself in a life-giving embrace the most fervent, the most intelligent and the most earnest children of India."²⁴ As we shall see later, the transcendent mystery of Christ does not find its full or adequate expression merely in the Graeco-Roman culture; every culture has to become a vehicle of his self-revelation. At this moment we want only to point out that going much beyond the theology of his time Johannis hints at a "mutual fulfilment". In our final evaluation we shall return to the question of fulfilment in Christ.

2. *The Vedanta and Christian Philosophy*

Johannis strongly believed that "there is no important philosophical doctrine of St Thomas which is not found in one or the other of the Vedanta systems".²⁵ The vedanta possesses "our philosophic materials, but it has not worked them into *one* system". In general the positive statements of these philosophers are true, but "they block up some other positive truth" and "extend their sectarian views over the whole of reality". If we harmonise the various positive truths found in the different vedanta philosophers we would see that between them and catholic philosophy there is no gulf, for in fact "the gulf lies... between the various vedanta systems themselves" which look like a "heap of loose limbs that awaits a common soul". Thus if we harmonise the positive truths of the different systems, we

would obtain a well unified theistic system, "akin to Thomism". The vedanta philosophers move in the same direction as catholic philosophy, but as they have not met, they have not reached the goal.

The above is from the introduction to Johannis' "To Christ through the Vedanta". Since he does not deny the total newness of Christ²⁶ whom he wants to preach to the hindus, we may say that what he intends by this paragraph is that the purely philosophical elements of Thomism are to be found in some form or other in the various vedanta systems and that without doing violence to the vedanta it could be "used" to build a base for a Christian philosophy and as a "foundation for the supernatural structure of Christianity". For the Vedanta has the 'materials' and we need only infuse a 'common soul', by developing what is incomplete, by leading them to their logical conclusion and by eliminating whatever is opposed to this 'natural' growth. Johannis does not say that all that is found in these systems is good and valuable for his synthesis, for there are unacceptable elements; he only wants to take what he calls "positive doctrines" and they imply at least a part of the truth. And a living philosophical system is more than its 'components', for it has a living principle, a 'common soul' which though it implies newness does not necessarily add something from without.

3. *Fidelity to the Method of the "early Christian Teachers" and of St Thomas Aquinas*

Another of the basic principles of Johannis is that in our approach to Hinduism we have to be faithful to the method of the "early christian teachers" and of St Thomas in their approach to the non-christian philosophies and religions.

a) *The Method of the Fathers*

Johannis does not refer to any particular Father or to any precise work, but merely affirms that the early christian teachers accepted willingly what they found in the Greek philosophies and synthesised it into a philosophical basis for christian doctrines.²⁷ The early Fathers, he says, enthusiastically welcomed the "Quest for the Transcendent One" of Plotinus, the "Ideal World" of Plato but completed it with the view of Aristotle according to whom the 'ideal world' is materialised in

individuality. Thus they effected a reconciliation between Plotinus, Plato and Aristotle, and formulated their own vision of the universe. They did not reject anything that was true and good and they believed that poets and philosophers too had 'seen' something of the Truth. Since Johannis follows closely the method of the Fathers and of Thomas, it is proper that we examine this principle a little more closely.

As to the attitude of the Fathers in general we may say with Fr Luneau that though the Fathers oppose very strongly and even condemn the religious practices and cults of the Nations, they borrow ideas and words from the philosophers of the Nations.²⁸ A few examples may be helpful: Justin the Apologist shows that though religious truth is hidden and disfigured in them, the religions of the Nations foreshadow the final event in God's economy. He affirms that "whatever, then has been uttered well among all men belongs to us christians".²⁹ The writings of Clement of Alexandria who is very severe on the practices and cults of the non-christians are full of citations from Greek authors. According to him philosophy was a gift bestowed on the Greeks by God for the service of the "philosophy agreeing with Christ".³⁰ So Clement too accepts the fact that the poets and philosophers have seen the truth, and while denouncing their mystery cults, he uses the "language of these cults to expound the mysteries of the christian faith";³¹ besides he wants to expound to the Greeks the mystery of the Logos using images familiar to them.³² Gregory of Nyssa through his allegorical interpretation of the life of Moses, sees the daughter of Pharaoh as the type of pagan philosophy, Moses' marriage as an example of the assimilation of pagan culture etc. "The term 'utilization'...occurs already in relevant passages of Clement's works, and then in Origen's letter to Gregory the Wonder-worker. With Gregory of Nyssa it is on the way to becoming technical. It denotes the legitimate assimilation of contents of pagan culture".³³

It is generally accepted by scholars that among the philosophers it is Plato, the 'spiritual', who is the favourite of the Fathers. What we can therefore gather from the Fathers' attitude to non-christian religions is that in spite of their opposition to the religious practices and cults, they look for the "seeds of the Word" wherever they can be found and 'use' them to express their own religious truths and doctrines. This is all that Johannis intends to learn from the Fathers: discern what is true

and beautiful in the philosophers and in the religions and complete whatever is incomplete.

However, the mention of Aristotle by Johanns calls for an explanation: how much was Aristotle known and 'used' by the Fathers? A quick glance at the works of the Fathers reveals to us that Aristotle was more or less known³⁴ to them either directly or through anthologies, but their attitude to him was rather hostile.³⁵ The major reasons for their antipathy towards him were the supposedly Aristotelian doctrines which limit Providence to the sphere of the moon and gave too much importance to the body and the material world in his description of happiness. Tertullian and Novatian among others mention Aristotle in their writings. Even Augustine appreciates Aristotle, although his preference was for Plato.³⁶

These few references show us that the early Fathers did know Aristotle, but it is difficult to establish any precise 'use' made by them of Aristotle's philosophy. Hence we may say with regard to Johanns that though we cannot find any clear reference to any particular Father borrowing a precise idea from Aristotle, the general principle stands, in as much as the Fathers did use ideas and concepts borrowed from the philosophers more or less as they were known.

b) *The Method of St Thomas Aquinas*

It is not without reason that Johanns follows more closely the method of the great doctor of the Church, who harmonised the religious and philosophical thought of the past into a coherent system.³⁷ As Maritain says, one should not ignore St Thomas Aquinas when busy with constructing a new system.³⁸ What is it that Johanns appreciates so much in St Thomas? Faithful to the tradition of the Fathers, St Thomas held that "purely rational truths could be a basis for supernatural truths", and he looked for a natural philosophical foundation for his theology among the great Greek thinkers and assimilated what was of value in them.

When he deals with the material world he follows Aristotle; when it is a question of pure spirits Plato becomes his guide and on the absolutely transcendent plane Plotinus leads the way, so one may say that his system is Aristotelian, Platonist and Plotinian. Guided by the light of faith, he assimilated into his own

whatever was of value in these systems, following the criterion that it should not contradict the facts of Revelation. "Thus in his comprehensive system he harmonises all the valuable aspects of the search for God as manifested in the evolution of Greek thought"³⁹ but obviously he went beyond any system, for his criterion and measure was Revelation.

St Thomas reveals more fully than the Fathers the inner potentiality and dynamism of the Christian faith in its ability to assimilate and integrate within itself all that is true and good, leaving aside all that is irrelevant and faulty.

Following, therefore, the method of the Fathers and of St Thomas, Johannis concludes that Christianity must lead all valuable aspirations found in non-christian religions to perfection and complete whatever is incomplete.⁴⁰

II. APPLICATION OF THESE PRINCIPLES TO HINDUISM

Johannis was quick to realise that such an approach to Hinduism was beset with many a difficulty. First of all the vedanta systems which he wanted to synthesise seemed to be a veritable jungle of opposing ideas, for "practically all the conceptions that have arisen during the evolution of religious thought are retained...within the various vedantic systems".⁴¹ Besides, there are the great obstacles like the theory of our identity with the Absolute, the impersonal character of the *Nirguna* Brahman of Sankara, the notion of the divine body according to Ramanuja and the absence of *creatio-ex-nihilo*. In the face of these difficulties Johannis is resolute, for he has the example of his predecessors who too did not find any idea of *creatio-ex-nihilo* in the philosophers they used⁴² and the Fathers had to grapple with the indeterminate One of Plotinus. Johannis is convinced that he could, with all the more reason, "evangelise the Indian wisdom", older and more extensive than that of Greece, for it is more "mystical and religious". Not only can we do so but we must because the "Church must prove that in this domain as in others she is catholic, adapted to all the nations and to all mentalities."⁴³

Now we shall proceed to a brief exposition of the method of Johannis in which the principles we have studied are worked out. We shall take only one example, namely the idea of God and of the material world in Sankara and Ramanuja and show how he integrates them into a theistic philosophy. However, it

must be observed that, besides Sankara and Ramanuja, he in fact integrates Madhava, Vallabha, Chaitanya and Jiva Goswami into his system. The section on Vallabha is the longest in his *To Christ through the Vedanta*. Yet if we may speak of a 'preference' it is Sankara who is the favourite of Johannis; and Ramanuja is the greatest of the Vaishnava theologians and hence he could be taken as a representative of the Bhakti trend. Faithful, therefore, to the method of St Thomas who integrated the great Greek thinkers within christian thought synthesising them within the wider system of the *analogia entis*⁴⁴ Johannis looks for the 'corner stone' of his theological structure in Hinduism. The 'corner stone' should affirm the pure spirituality, absolute transcendence, the non-relativity and simplicity of God. And this is precisely what he found in Sankara. As regards the basic doctrine of Sankara, he writes "we have no hesitation in saying that it is the doctrine of the absolute independence of God."⁴⁵

A. Johannis' understanding of Sankara and Ramanuja

1) Sankara's Idea of God

Sankara insists that the idea of God⁴⁶ can be had only from Scripture. Hence he bases himself entirely on the Scriptures. According to these Brahman is the absolute Subject—the That or Being in itself identical with the absolute Predicate, the absolute What or the absolute Intelligibility in act, which Sankara calls Knowledge.⁴⁷ According to the Upanishads, God is not only the efficient but also the material cause of the world,⁴⁸ while Sankara himself had discovered the doctrine of the self-subsistence and independence of God, "more or less implied in the Upanishads". Hence Sankara is forced to conclude: the Supreme cannot undergo change; there is no real *parināma*, no real evolution of Brahman possible, but only a *vivarta*, the illusion of an evolution. Citing Dandoy, Johannis says, "And it is the glory of the Advaita that alone among the Vedanta Systems, it has maintained, even at the cost of the reality of the world, the true notion that the Self-Subsistent is absolutely unchangeable, without modes or accidents".⁴⁹

Therefore if God has neither completely nor incompletely passed into the world, and since the world, if it existed, would destroy the self-subsistence and independence of God, Sankara refused to accept the reality or even the possibility of the world.

Obviously Sankara had to choose only those texts which affirmed the spirituality and independence of God and explain away all the other texts which spoke of the self-evolution of God as only preparatory to the supreme truth: *Tat tvam asi*.

How is this 'supreme Truth' understood? According to the interpretation of Johannis, for Sankara the individual self neither as individual nor as universal is the Absolute, but only as pure Subject, as indeterminate self-subsistent form. The individual subject as individual is not the Absolute for the individual subject is the self as animating the body and illuminating its faculties. But since the Absolute does not evolve into bodies, nor does the absolute light stream out to illuminate the unconscious mental and vital faculties that constitute the body, the individuality of the soul is a mere illusion. Also the individual self as universal soul is not the Absolute, for a universal subject would be possible only if there was a universal body which would be an evolution of the absolute Subject which is impossible according to Sankara. Hence Johannis concludes that *Tat tvam asi* means that the Absolute Subject is identical with the Absolute Object.⁵⁰ God is being by himself and for himself, hence he is perfect "selfness" and interiority of being, perfect self-sufficiency or bliss (*ānanda*). So for Sankara God is identically *Sac-cid-ānanda*, that is, Being absolutely pure, Intelligence unmixed, self-sufficiency absolutely complete. Thus, "the definition of God as *sac-cid-ānanda* puts forth the objective aspect of God whereas the *tat-tvam-asi* exposes the subjective aspect; in reality the two definitions are equivalent".⁵¹

From such an elevated notion of the Absolute there are two conclusions: first the unreality of the world, and second, the impossibility of obtaining a knowledge of God from the world. The knowledge of God that we derive from the world is false, for it reveals to us a *Saguna* God, God with attributes, related and dependent. The world is a veil that hides and deforms the independent and absolutely self-sufficient, *Nirguna*, indeterminate Brahman.

2) Ramanuja's Idea of God

A student of advaita philosophy, Ramanuja later became a vigorous opponent of Sankara. He wanted to justify the personal religion of bhakti which called for a personal God whom San-

kara had relegated to the sphere of relative reality. According to Ramanuja, Reality is one. He says that the world composed of animate and inanimate beings is nothing else than the Brahman.⁵² Nevertheless souls and nature are also real. "The great positive doctrine of Ramanuja is that God is indeed real and independent, but that souls, distinct from God, and the world are real also, although their reality is utterly dependent on that of God".⁵³

God, who is an infinite substance possessing an infinity of qualities, is the ultimate foundation of everything. This God possesses also a "personal body", besides his cosmic body, and is a person who can know, feel and love. Since Ramanuja accepts the scriptural teaching of immanent causality, he holds the real but non-essential transformation of the primal cause. The many will therefore be different transformations of the primal cause, but they are modes, qualities of this One Reality. The "Absolute is one unchanging substrate of many different qualities, an *Advaitam*, but modified, *visistam*".⁵⁴

The mention by Johanns of a "personal body" of God according to the theory of Ramanuja raises a question: what does Johanns mean by a 'personal body'? We know that the *Brhadāranyaka* Upanishad (3.7.3) speaks of the relation of Brahman to the world; and Ramanuja gives a definition of body which he refers to the cosmic body of Brahman. "Any substance which an intelligent soul is capable of completely controlling and supporting for its own purpose and which stands to the soul in an entirely subordinate relation, is the body of that soul" (*Sri Bhāṣya*, II, 1.9.). Johanns however speaks not merely of a cosmic body but of a personal body. He says: "But besides this cosmic body, Ramanuja ascribes to Brahman a personal, transcendent body, proper to Him, truly divine with its own peculiar attributes of eternal youthfulness....This body is not made of common matter (*prakṛti*), nor *karma*-wrought...it does not impair divine liberty. But it is yet individual and localised".⁵⁵ Ramanuja himself affirms the impassibility of Brahman in spite of his body (*Sri Bhāṣya*, I, 11, 8; III, 11,12).

3) *Gathering up the Fragments*

Such is the rational foundation on which Johanns would wish to build his christian philosophy "akin to Thomism". Sankara has supplied him with a concept of God who is transcend-

ent, absolute unity of Being and Knowing, independent and simplicity itself. From this independence and unrelatedness of God follows the impossibility of the existence of the world. But according to Sankara this God is the uncaused cause of the universe,⁵⁶ and since the modification of the cause into the effect is illusory, the world can only be "in God and in the way of God, as the effect is in the cause in the manner of the cause. Hence, as God is mere identity, the world disappears in God, it is only in Him *modo eminenti*; it cannot maintain itself before God, as distinct from Him or existing in its own way".⁵⁷ By the words "in the way of God" Johannis means that there is no independent existence of the world, but it is in the manner God exists. That is, as God is mere identity, the world disappears in Him. Johannis concludes that "Sankara...admirably describes God as He is in Himself and as the foundation of all possibility". It may seem that he contradicts what he has said above, that there is no possibility of the existence of the world. In fact, all that he means is what Sankara himself says: "the imperishable is the unevolved as form of germinal virtuality of names and forms" (B.B. 1.2.22). Johannis' contention is that, given such a perfect idea of God, we can rightly consider it the foundation of all. Ramanuja's contribution, on the other hand, is the concept of a God who is related to the world. His description of God as a spiritual substrate with an infinity of attributes "makes it possible for us to give a positive content to the notion of absolute simplicity, whereas Sankara's notion helps us to correct the anthropomorphism that marks our analogical conception".⁵⁸ Sankara and Ramanuja must, therefore, be harmonised. Ramanuja's conception of the world as an effect which expresses the nature of the cause, God, and is in itself an image of God, is a positive contribution to the philosophical synthesis of Johannis. However, because the world is ultimately a divine reality, "divine body" externalised, we shall have to correct and complete Ramanuja by the notion of *creatio ex nihilo*, as we shall see presently.

Johannis, however, is obliged to 'correct' or rather, re-interpret a few notions of Sankara. His idea of the indeterminateness of the Absolute, for example, could be understood not as an intrinsic quality but as a sign of transcendence; that is the way in fact, some christian mystics think of God. "The mystics intuit transcendence and call it the infinitely deep night of God.

God allows a glimpse into himself, but as into a night which nothing can penetrate. This night, nevertheless is a flash of lightning".⁵⁹ The divine transcendence, by reason of its brilliancy appears to them as profound 'darkness'. Johannis here refers to Dionysius the Areopagite who expressed most beautifully the idea of "the superessential Radiance of the Divine Darkness". He speaks about the mysteries of God which are "veiled in the dazzling obscurity of the secret Silence, outshining all brilliance with the intensity of their Darkness, and surcharging our blinded intellect with the utterly impalpable and invisible fairness of glories surpassing all beauty".⁶⁰ Following this tradition of the mystics Johannis says that God is the infinite and indeterminate plenitude of goodness. We do not however identify indeterminateness with infinity, but in as much as we cannot 'determine' God without destroying his transcendence, we may speak of an indeterminateness with regard to our knowledge of God. Johannis adds that this indeterminate plenitude is 'expression'. God expresses his infinite intelligence as realised in his infinite truth; he becomes thus infinite consciousness of himself and for himself and consequently the act and expression of truth. From this interpretation follows the necessary conclusion that our "identity with God" must be seen as our intimacy with God. For us, therefore, the 'thou art that' can only mean that He is the other self who lives in us by communication of his divine nature. Far from absorbing us by this presence he establishes us divinely in ourselves, for there we are fully present to ourselves.⁶¹

B. *Creatio-ex-nihilo and the Synthesis*

According to Johannis it is only the theory of *creatio-ex-nihilo* which will enable us to synthesise the two systems of the vedanta and insert them within the *philosophia perennis*. The theory of creation, in so far as it asserts that before its production the effect 'exists' in the cause in the manner of the cause, coincides with the *satkārya* theory, held in common by Sankara and Ramanuja, but each in his own way. Ramanuja holds a *parināma-vāda*, the real transformation of the cause into the effect; Sankara holds *vivartavāda*, the illusory transformation of the cause, since the modification of the cause into the effect is an illusion.⁶² Yet since he accepts a certain superiority of the cause over the effect and says that the imperishable is

the unevolved as form of germinal virtuality of names and forms,⁶³ we may attribute the notion of *satkūrya* to him too. Since according to Sankara, God 'contains' the world in his own way, that is, in absolute identity, the world can claim only 'privation'⁶⁴ as its own and, as distinct from God, it may be called a sphere of privation. God who is reality is by essence goodness itself, and goodness being self-communicative, what God freely communicates is reality and not an illusion. The creativity of God presupposes creability as its necessary term. Hence, "if God creates, His creation must be received in that privation".⁶⁵ Since God is the only absolute He has to find in Himself alone the pattern, so His action would be that of a principle of reproductivity acting on privation as principle of reproductibility. But lest God 'become' while 'reproducing', He cannot be the immanent principle of reproductibility; hence this principle falls within the sphere of privation and the world must be its own substantial matter and substantial form and thus related to God as to its perfective principle, the absolute Reproductive Principle.

Accordingly, the world depending directly on the creative action of God, is real, but a relative reality, since it is essentially compenetrated with privation of reality and essentially limited and finite. For since there is, on the one hand, God 'containing' all things *modo eminenti*, and, on the other, total privation or passive possibility which is nothing in itself nor for itself, the world that arises by creation must be by and for God. Being by and for God, it is something in itself as received into privation and hence essentially finite and distinct from God who is essentially infinite.

We may conclude that *creatio-ex-nihilo* brings consistency and harmony to the apparently opposed theories of the vedanta.

The Vedanta insists on the world being nothing without God, or on the world being a mere form of God, or on the world being a substantial reality outside God. This world is all that. But each vedanta by stressing one aspect, drops the others. Sankara stresses the aspect that the world is nothing without God and drops the essential relation of the world to God. Ramanuja emphasizes the relation of the world to God...but he neglects the great truth that God, before being a God of participation is a God of iden-

tity or that it is because God contains all reality in the shape of Reality that His participability is an essential attribute, one with His nature..."⁶⁶

If Sankara had continued his line of reflection he should have reached the notion of *creatio-ex-nihilo* as there is no other way open,⁶⁷ but since the Scriptures do not affirm creation out of nothing,⁶⁸ he did not draw more than a negative conclusion. Ramanuja's notion of the world as a body of God has a positive value in as much as it expresses very clearly the total dependence of the created universe on the Absolute. However since he does not succeed fully in safeguarding the absolute simplicity and transcendence of God, he would have to modify his idea of the world as a body of God. When one accepts the existence of a transcendent, spiritual and independent God, one is forced into the notion of *creatio-ex-nihilo*. We may say that Sankara prepares the way for it by leaving only a sphere of total privation outside God, and Ramanuja and other bhaktas more positively through their notion of God's self-gift and the abandonment of ourselves to him. "Let us make ourselves for God by wholesale surrender, for God has made himself for us by wholesale surrender".⁶⁹ They know that the more they surrender themselves to God, the more He surrenders Himself to them. This is a preparation for the theory of the *creatio-ex-nihilo*, for creation as we understand it is a mystery of love. The condescending, "descending" direction of love finds its best expression in this doctrine, where God gives Himself to souls out of pure gratuitous love—even before they could surrender themselves to him. Speaking of grace in the theology of Vallabha, Father Johanns says: "Since *creatio-ex-nihilo* alone can justify the law of love, let *creatio-ex-nihilo* be admitted to save the most beautiful intuition of the Indian mind".⁷⁰

Thus we have briefly outlined how Johanns builds a perfectly theistic 'philosophy' of God and the world upon the structure of the vedanta, by systematising Sankara and Ramanuja on the unshakable foundation of the theory of *creatio-ex-nihilo*. The same applies to all the great theologians of the vedanta when they are made to agree among themselves as Johanns has tried to do in his *To Christ through the Vedanta* and other writings.

III. SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

We have merely sketched the main principles at work in the writings of Johanns and have called attention to the way he tries to build a complete system of philosophy or theology based on the pattern of Thomism but with the materials of the vedanta. He does not mean to destroy the vedanta but to make it complete and enable it to follow its own natural growth. Such a vedantic-thomism, he claims, would be intelligible to the educated hindus. Though he does not expose a christology ex professo, Christ is the very centre of his theology, and it is to Him that the whole vedanta points: "to Christ through the Vedanta".

An immense love for Hinduism, materialised in a profound study and assimilation of it, leads him to see it as a *praeparatio evangelica*, indeed the best 'natural' preparation for Christianity. In order to assume the true values of the rich religious tradition of Hinduism and to lead them to their true goal, Christ, Johanns follows the method of St Thomas Aquinas and of the early teachers of Christianity, who assimilated whatever was useful to them in other religions to express their own doctrines. By applying the same principles to Hinduism Johanns reconciled the ideas of Sankara and Ramanuja on God and the world with the notion of *creatio-ex-nihilo*. It should be said, however, that the summary we have presented does not do full justice to Father Johanns' achievement.

By way of an evaluation we must say that Johanns has not received the attention he deserves neither in his life time nor posthumously, probably because he wrote most of his articles in a small magazine with a limited circulation and also perhaps because of his 'unscientific' procedure: he knew Sankara's thought so well that he could expose it without explicit reference to the sources, but that does not help a critical study of Johanns' work. Perhaps the main reason may well be that "Indian catholics as a whole remained impervious to any serious study of hindu thought and *The Light of the East* had to cease publication for lack of support".⁷¹

The work of Johanns is, so far, the only systematic and serious attempt to study the whole of the vedanta—all the different schools—in the light of Thomist philosophy, and in that sense it is a pioneer work. He has shown at least one serious way to a Christian interpretation of the vedanta. His approach

is of value at least from one point of view: it is suitable for an intellectual formation of Indian Christians, especially of priests and missionaries. "Their (the writings of Father Johanns) usefulness, I think, is chiefly for the missionary himself to guide him in his approach to the spiritual-minded".⁷² When we study the vedanta under the light of our Faith, we shall find its thought system adapted to the Indian mind, as Brahmabandhav had clearly seen. Johanns has shown us an excellent way. He has followed St. Thomas, who as J. Maritain says, has a value even for today and cannot be disregarded, but Johanns' aim was not to establish the 'perennial value' of Thomism, nor to advocate that all should follow that system. He saw that the attempt he made to synthesise the vedanta with Christian philosophy was only a modest beginning, calling for 'generations of collaborators' to continue and perfect it. He hoped that each lover of India and Christianity would bring his own contribution to the construction of an Indian-christian philosophy, as he himself had done. Johanns has also rendered us a great service by "declaring a merciless war" on our ignorance of Hinduism. He says that if we have not been able to "convert the high castes up to now" it is because of our complete ignorance of Indian religious ideals. He insisted that missionaries of the future should have a thorough knowledge of Hinduism and other Indian religions.⁷³

If, however, a Johanns' work is of value for the intellectual formation of the christian, it is legitimate to ask what value it has for a meeting with the hindu, what value as a missionary approach, because as we have seen, his perspective is missionary, and at the end of the fourth part of *To Christ through the Vedanta* he says: "We have preached Christ as we are in duty bound... In the name of the Church we invite India to listen bound... But we are nothing... We can only repeat what we have to the revelation that comes from God".⁷⁴ We may also say that it was to the hindu intelligentsia who have been outside the sphere of missionary activity and who have some understanding of their own religion that he set himself the task of announcing Christ. It is to his credit that he did not want to preach to them something that was 'foreign' but something their own philosophy naturally led them to.

Hindus believe in the superiority of their own religion. Dr Sarma, for example, says: "India's need is not, therefore, any fresh imported religion as christian missionaries want to make

us believe. On the contrary, the rest of the world is in need of India's vedanta for making its religion more liberal and broad-minded".⁷⁵ To such a hindu, on the other hand, Johanns says: "Will the hindus then examine the claim we make to possess in its highest fulfilment the realisation of their ideal...?"⁷⁶ One may ask if the christian can rest content with asserting that the transcendency of the message he announces comes not from himself but from Christ and that truth has its own claims. The very 'uniqueness' of the Message, it seems to me, obliges us to find ways of presenting it in a way psychologically and sociologically adapted to the listener, so that he will open himself to the Word. We can only say that in spite of the praiseworthy effort of presenting the christian message in vedantic terms, a hindu will not be disposed to listen to the Word if right at the start we antagonize him by a head-on clash with his cherished ideas. This leads to the further question whether a meeting with Hinduism *beginning with* a doctrinal confrontation is possible at all! Abbé Monchanin warns us that a rethinking of the vedanta can be meaningful for the christian but will not convince a hindu.⁷⁷ However, this problem of meeting on a doctrinal level will be discussed later. Here it is enough to point out that what is required is not so much to build an 'Indian Thomism' or 'vedantic Thomism', as to listen to the Word of God in the Indian context and give experience of it a coherent expression.

Johanns believed that "the hindus may accept our philosophy without forsaking their own greatest philosophers".⁷⁸ We must ask how far this is true and what is meant by "our philosophy". Given the fact that his aim is missionary and that he studies even Hindu philosophy as ways of salvation or spirituality, and that the Thomistic philosophy itself with which he is concerned takes its doctrine of *creatio-ex-nihilo* and all its consequences from Revelation, we may say that he is not concerned with a purely rational philosophy. His own words confirm this view: "We have preached Christ...When India shall agree to make this supreme self-renunciation (the acceptance of man's utter nothingness and sinfulness) then and then only shall she feel the need of Christ. For as long as she maintains that man is qualitatively identical with God...so long will Krishna appear her right God....The cult India offers to Krishna cannot lead the soul to this plane [Fellowship with the Trinity]".⁷⁹ The Hindu is asked by Johanns to accept the fact of *creatio-ex-nihilo* (which is not philosophical) and to abandon everything of his philo-

sophy which does not square with this theory: the identity of the soul with God, the uncreated, eternal nature of the soul and the like. He is asked, however, to abandon only those elements which would in fact impede the real growth of his philosophy, and not the whole of his philosophy. Yet it would seem that he is asked to "purify" his highly religious philosophy of its religious elements and keep but a skeleton. But when Johannis asks the hindu "to get down on his knees" it is not for accepting "our philosophy" but for accepting Christ who is not just a sum total of all the vedanta systems well harmonised, but a pure gift of God granted to the humble. For that knowledge which "surpasses all knowledge" the hindu may have, like St Paul, to consider all other knowledge as nothing and pass through a death. Hence, given the missionary, apostolic aim of Johannis and his consideration of Hinduism as ways of spirituality, some of his statements like "the hindus will find Christ if they find themselves fully", "they will have to abandon nothing", "all important doctrines of St Thomas are found in the vedanta" must be understood with modifications.

It would be unjust to evaluate Father Johannis in the light of present day theology which acknowledges salvific value in non-christian religions and no longer considers them as purely "natural religions"; for a religion based purely on philosophical insight is a fiction and an impossibility;⁸⁰ we should rather appreciate him in his own context. In the early half of this century he had certainly gone very much ahead of his time by his acceptance of the positive values of Hinduism, his love and appreciation of what was good in it and his desire to let nothing be lost which was good; and the masterly synthesis he achieved is a great pioneer work. In conclusion we can say that the approach of Johannis, though of doubtful value for meeting the hindu and as a 'missionary method', is of value for the christian as a prototype of something that remains to be achieved. Hence he deserves our gratitude.

FOOT NOTES

Chapter I

The following abbreviations are used in this chapter:

LE = The Light of the East. PRV = "La philosophie religieuse du vedanta". DV = "La divinisation dans le vedanta". TCS = Théologie catholique et sagesse des indés. PAC = "Pierres d'attente du christianisme". AR = "L'avatar dans l'hindouisme". IntV = Introduction to the Vedanta. BB = Brahmasutra Bhasya.

1. Cf. B. Animananda, *Swami Upadhyay Brahmbandhav*, A Sketch in two parts, Calcutta, 1908; *The Blade*, Calcutta, 1949. A more complete bibliography of the works of Brahmbandhav and works on him can be found in "The Sanskrit Hymns of Brahmbandhav Upadhyay" by G. Gispert-Sauch, S.J., *Religion and Society*, XIX (1972) 4, 60-79. The major publications of Upadhyay are *Sophia* and *The Twentieth Century* in English and *Sandhya*, *Svaraj* and *Karali* in Bengali.
2. Animananda, *The Blade*, 196.
3. *The Tablet*, London, (3 Jan. 1903) 7.
4. Cf. *Sophia*, (Jan. 1895) 6.
5. Cf. Animananda, *Swami Upadhyaya*, II, 33; see also 30f.
6. *Sophia*, (July 1898) 101-102.
7. Cf. Animananda, *Swami Upadhyaya*, II, 51ff. P. Turmes, "Samaj Dharm and Sadan Dharm", in *Clergy Monthly Suppl.*, 6 (1963) 330-334; De Smet, "Comments on Samaj Dharma and Sadhan Dharma", *ibid.*, 335-337.
8. *Sophia*, (Aug. 1898) 123.
9. Cf. *Sophia*, (Jan. 1895) 6.
10. Cf. *The Blade*, 81f. Mgr. Zaleski, the Apostolic Delegate, definitely forbade such an undertaking. Cf. *Sophia*, (Oct. 1894) 15-16.
11. Cf. the article of Gispert-Sauch mentioned above and my own article: "Interpreting Christ: the Calcutta School" in *The Indian Journal of Theology*, 23 (1974) 191ff.
12. *LE*, II (1923) 2, 6.
13. *LE*, I (1922) 1 to vol. XII (1934) 7; altogether a hundred and thirty seven instalments. For other works, please see the bibliography.
14. *LE*, I (1922) 1, 1-2.
15. *LE*, IV (1925) 1, 1-2.
16. *Bulletins de la classe des lettres et de sciences morales et politiques*, XIV (1928) 5, 9-12.
17. See my study, "Interpreting Christ to India. A Pioneer, Pierre Johannis, S.J.", in *Clergy Monthly*, 37 (1973) 46-56. A preliminary remark is in place: the transliteration of Sanskrit words and names used by Father Johannis differs much from the present day practice; he himself is not always consistent. We shall however for the sake of uniformity, follow the modern system in the quotations and elsewhere.

18. *LE*, V (1927) 6, 4.
19. *Hinduism*, London, (1938) 28; see also, *LE*, XI (1932) 2, 13-15.
20. Cf. Johanns, *Hinduism*, pp. 15, 28. However, according to Johanns, grace in hindu theology does not 'elevate' the soul to a 'supernatural' state (it is divine by nature), but 'raises' it to its 'natural' state, freeing it from the unnatural situation in which it exists. see *AH*, 65-72.
21. *LE*, I (1922) 1, 3.
22. *LE*, VIII (1930) 9, 6.
23. Cf. *PRV*, 688.
24. *LE*, IV (1925) 1, 1. Though Dandoy was the editor, we may say that the general line of thought of the review represents the thought of Johanns as well.
25. *LE*, I (1922) 1, 3. This whole paragraph is based on this text of the *LE*.
26. See *Col.* 1. 15-20 St Irenaeus affirms the total newness which Christ brought with him by his coming. *Adv. Hereses*, IV, 34, 1 (see *Sources Chrétiennes*, 100. Paris, 1965, 848).
27. For the whole paragraph, see, *DV*, 67ff.
28. Cf. A. Luneau, "Pour aider au Dialogue: Les pères et les religions non-chrétiennes", in *Nouvelle revue théol.* 89 (1967) 823ff.
Cf. Paul Hacker, "The religions of the Gentiles as viewed by Fathers of the Church", in *Zeitschrift für Missionswissenschaft und Religionswissenschaft*, 54 (1970) 4, 253ff. He shows clearly that the Fathers in spite of their very severe condemnations of the religious practices, 'use' the philosophies of these religions.
29. Justin, *Apologia* II, 13. (Migne, P.G., VI, 466); see *Apologia*, I, 21, 23, 54.
30. *Stromata*, VI (Migne, P.G., IX, 287).
31. Hacker, *op. cit.*, 263.
32. *Cohortatio ad Gentes*, XII, (Migne, P.G., VIII, 239).
33. Hacker, *op. cit.*, 268.
34. The opinion of Collet is exaggerated: "The Fathers knew Aristotle as much as they knew Plato", *Dict. de Théologie Cath.* Paris, 1909, col. 1871.
J. Owens is more exact: "Among the Christian Fathers the attitude towards Aristotle was not favourable", *New Cath. Encyclopedia*, 1966, Article: Aristotle, p. 8.
35. Cf. A.J. Festugière. *L'Idéal religieux des Grecs et l'Evangile*, Paris, 1932, 253, 262, 225. For Cyril of Alexandria's attitude, see Migne, P.G., vol. 75, 147; Clement of Alexandria accuses Aristotle of limiting providence to the sphere of the moon, Migne, P.G., VIII, 171.
36. Cf. *De Civitate Dei*, VIII, 12.
37. Cf *TCS*, 160f; *PAC*, 173f. See, also *Encyclopédie de la Foi*, IV, ed. du Cerf. 1967, 323-324.
38. Cf. *Le Docteur Angélique*, Desclée, Paris, 1930, 72.

39. PAC, 173.
40. Cf. DV, 67-68; "Hold Fast that which is Good", in LE, XII (1933) 3, 25-27.
41. IntV, 20. The words of D.S. Sarma might clarify Father Johanns: "The soul of Hinduism has ever been the same even though it has had different embodiments in different ages and among different levels of people", *Basic Beliefs of Hinduism*, with J.N. Banerjee, Calcutta, YMCA, 1955, 6.
42. "In Aristotle there is no mention of creation. His world was an eternal one,...without a Provident God,...", Chenu, M.D. *Toward understanding St Thomas*, Chicago, 1964, 35.
43. TCS, 162.
44. IntV, 36. According to the wider system based on *analogia entis*, the world is both similar and dissimilar to God: it is a reproduction or an image of God, hence the question as to its identity with God and its differences does not arise. This system requires *creatio-ex-nihilo*, for the world must subsist 'outside' God, but with a relative self-subsistence. At the same time it must be noted that the fact of *creatio-ex-nihilo* gives rise to the idea of *analogia entis*. Hence it is under the light of faith that Thomas integrates all the systems into the christian philosophy; cf. TCS, 167.
45. LE 1 (1922) 2, 3.
46. Generally Father Johanns uses the term 'God' for the Absolute of Sankara. One may ask, does not Sankara himself use these terms indifferently? "In the *Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya* the supreme Absolute (*param brahman*) and the supreme Self (*paramātman*) are interchangeable with God (*Isvara*). Even in the case of mystical knowledge (*upāsana*), *parambrahman* and *paramatman* may refer to *Isvara*. The expressions *isvaro'smi* (*Upādeśahasri* 1. 3.1) and *aham isvarah* (*ibid.* 1. 10. 8) parallel *aham isvarah* (*Brahmasūtra Bhāṣya*, 4.1.3.). These three are variants of *aham brahmasmi* (*Brh. Up.* 1.4.10.). Thus it appears that Sankara calls the Absolute Brahman and Isvara.", M. Dhavamony, "Sankara's idea of Creation", in *Studia Missionalia*, XVIII (1969) 55. However it is generally accepted that Sankara does make a distinction between the Impersonal, unqualified Absolute (Brahman) and the personal God (*Isvara*). Cf. BB 2. 1. 14. Scriptural texts seem to affirm the same: Cf. *Brh. Up.* 4, 5, 15; 2, 3, 6; *Chand. Up.* 7. 24. 1 etc. Since therefore Sankara does make the distinction and Johanns uses the term God for the Absolute, we should say that there is an element of imprecision here.
47. Cf. Johanns, "Hinduism". LE, XIII (1934) 3, 32-33.
48. At least this is how Sankara understands the Upanishads. Cf. Sankara, BB, 1, 4, 23; Cf. also *Chand. UP.* VI. 2; *Brh. UP.* 1, 4, 10; R.C. Zaehner, "Creation in the early Hindu Scriptures", in *Stud. Miss.* XVIII (1969) 13-40; On Sankara's theory of Creation. Dhavamony, *op. cit.*, 41-59. esp. 47ff.
49. LE, I (1922) 2, 4. See also BB, 2, 1, 27.
50. Cf. LE, I (1923) 5, 3. Johanns uses terms like 'object', 'objecti-

- vity' etc. with regard to the Brahman, but Sankara positively denies that Brahman is an object. "The sastra's purport is not to represent Brahman definitely as this or that object, its purpose is rather to show that Brahman as the eternal Subject (*pratyagatman*, the inward self) is never an object, and thereby to remove the distinction of objects known, knowers, acts of knowledge etc, which is fictitiously created by Nescience", *Vedanta-Sutras with Sankara's commentary*, Part 1, p. 32. (*Sacred Books of the East*, Ed. Max Müller, vol. XXXIV, 1890). Sankara then quotes *Ke. Up.* 11, 3; 111, 4, 2. It seems to me that Johanns does not go against this affirmation of Sankara, for he says: "...as the unity of Being and Knowing, God is the absolute negation of all opposition that obtains in this world between the field of nature and the field of spirit, and He is the highest perfection", *LE*, 5 (1927) 4, 5. By objectivity he means 'substantiality': "The Absolute is not only absolute subjectivity (*tvam, cit*) it is also absolute objectivity (*tat, sat*) or substantiality", *LE* 1 (1923) 5, 3. Johanns refers, no doubt, to *Questiones Disputatae, De Veritate*, Q. 2 art 2: "Utrum Deus cognoscat vel sciat se ipsum?", where the perfect identity of the knower and the known is affirmed. Therefore Johanns can here only mean by 'object' Being, Reality, or 'substantiality'.
51. *LE*, V (1927) 4, 5; Cf. also *LE*, 1 (1923) 5, 3. See how a Hindu scholar speaks of the same: "Hindu philosophers describe the unconditioned Brahman as *Satchidananda*, existence-knowledge-bliss pure and absolute. Existence, knowledge and bliss are not attributes of reality; they are its very stuff. Pure existence is the same as pure knowledge and pure bliss... Therefore the term *existence* as applied to Brahman is to be understood as the negation of both empirical reality and its correlative, unreality". Nikhilananda, *Hinduism*, 16.
 52. Cf. *Sri Bhasya*, II, I, 15. He refers to *Chand. Up.* 6.1. 8; see also O. Lacombe, *L'Absolu selon le vedanta*, Paris, 1966, 99.
 53. *LE*, 1 (1923) 11, 4.
 54. *LE*, II (1923) 1, 5.
 55. *LE*, II (1923) 3, 4.
 56. *BB.* 2. 3. 9; 2. 1. 22. Cf. Dhavamony, "Sankara's idea of creation," 48f.
 57. *LE*, 5 (1927) 4, 5.
 58. "Hinduism", *LE*, XIII (1935) 6, 68. In other words, to the *via affirmationis* of Ramanuja that God is good, holy etc, and to the *via negationis* that is the negation of the finitude of these qualities, Sankara adds that *via transcendentiae*, the affirmation that to know God as he is, we have to transcend the form of judgement which is natural to us and confess that God not only possesses goodness etc, but that he is really Goodness itself, identically and inseparably. Cf. Johanns, *LE*, III (1924) 3, 4.
 59. *TCS*, 170.
 60. Dionysius the Areopagite. *The Mystical Theology and The Celestial Hierarchies*, Surrey, 1949, 9.

This idea is common to other mystics as well. See Gregory of Nyssa, Migne, *P.G.*, 44, 376c-377a, 457a etc. "The 'darkness' of this 'light' of faith fills the pages of the mystics. The light of faith, they say, is so bright that it blinds and darkens the intellect... this way of speaking found throughout Gregory, Ruysbroeck and St John of the Cross, appears also in the author of the *Cloud...*", William Johnston, *The Mysticism of the Cloud of Unknowing*, New York, 1967, 60-61. The same author writes, "Hence we can say that 'the Divine Darkness is the unapproachable light in 'which God is said to dwell'... Such is the doctrine that flows through the apophatic mystics to the time of St John of the Cross", *ibid.*, 33-34. See also, John of the Cross, *Ascent*, II, 111, 1 etc. We shall return to this point later in the chapter on Monchanin.

61. Cf. Johannis, *La Pensée Religieuse*, 214; TCS, 168-171.
62. Cf. *Upadesasahasri*, I.19.17; M. Dhavamony, "Sankara's idea of creation", 51ff. It must be noted that Sankara himself does not use the term *vivartavada*.
63. Cf. *BB*, 2.3.9 and 1.2.22.
64. The word 'privation' occurs often in the writings of Johannis in relation to the idea of creation. By it he does not mean the absence of something that is due, but the idea of mere non-existence. He intends by it total privation, total non-existence, nothingness.
65. *LE*, V (1927) 5, 6. "On account of its creativity the divine essence thus fecundates the abyss of nothingness and turns it into a fertile soil from which the world can arise", "Hinduism", *LE*, XIII (1935), 44. Cf. St Thomas, *Summa Theol.* Ia, 6, art 3; Ia, 44, 45 etc. (on creation).
66. *LE*, XIII (1935) 10, 116; Cf. also, *LE*, XIII (1935) 4, 43-44.
67. Cf. *BB*, 1. 4. 24; Fr. M. Ledrus in "L'Absolu Brahmanique", in *Gregorianum*, XIII (1932) 261-277 shows that Sankara was really tending to that idea (p. 274, note 1).
68. Cf. for example, Nikhilananda, *Hinduism*, 23: "Hinduism does not accept the theory of creation out of nothing at a particular point of time".
69. Johannis. *Hinduism*, CTS, London. p. 31. For this section, see also, *La Pensée Religieuse*, 215; "Christian faith and the vedanta", in *LE*, XIV (1936) 8, 95.
70. *LE*, VIII (1930) 4, 7; Cf. *LE*, V (1926) 3, 5-6.
71. Bede Griffiths, *Christian Ashram*, London, 1966, 61, see also 169. Robin Boyd, *An Introduction to Indian Christian theology*, 1969, 91-92, 261. Boyd thinks that because of the "general Thomist approach" (p. 261) Johannis' attempt is of little value.
72. J. Bayart, "The Religious Thought of India", in *India Missionary Bulletin*, 2 (1954) 1, 37.
73. Cf. TCS, 178.
74. *LE*, VIII (1930) 10, 6; see also, TCS, 178-9.
75. D.S. Sarama, *The Renaissance of Hinduism*. Benares Hindu University, 1944, 304. Cf. O. Lacombe: "The Hindu, if he is

strictly orthodox will not hesitate to assert: "It is our very serious and sincere belief that our vedic religion is the chief source of all religions...", *Bulletin of the Secretariate for non-Christians*, Dec. 1966, p. 155.

76. *LE*, VIII (1930) 10, 6.

77. Cf. "Malentendu", in *Eglise Vivante*, 1955, n. 2, p. 96; Cf. R.C. Zaehner, *Concordant Discord*, Oxford, 1970, 12.

78. *LE*, V (1927) 4, 4-5.

79. *LE*, VIII (1930) 10, 6.

80. Cf. for example, E. Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, London, 1963, 8-9 (footnote): "A religion founded purely on philosophical insight, 'natural religion' based on that which the unaided human spirit can achieve of itself, is a fiction, metaphysically impossible in fact... In concrete all religions presuppose an at least anonymous supernatural revelation and faith". "The religions cannot therefore merely be 'natural religion'—based purely on natural knowledge of God—shot through with human deprivation. The religions and their manifestations must contain or have contained a supernatural element, even though disfigured beyond recognition", Adolf Darlap in *Sacramentum Mundi*, V, 285.

CHAPTER II

THE ELAN OF HINDU SPIRITUALITY (PROFESSOR O. LACOMBE)

The richness of Hinduism makes it possible to envisage diverse approaches to it. We have already discussed the approach of a missionary, Father Johanns, who tried to achieve a doctrinal synthesis between the best elements of the vedanta and Christianity. Now we shall consider the method of approach of a professional philosopher and a scholar of Hinduism, Professor Olivier Lacombe, who looks at it more as a source of enrichment for Christianity and humanity in general.

Professor of Comparative Philosophy at the Sorbonne, Knight of the *Legion of Honour* and one time Consultor to the *Secretariate for non-Christians*, Olivier Lacombe was born at Liège (Belgium) on 2 July, 1904.¹ An alumnus of the *École Normale Supérieure* at the Sorbonne, he is a *Docteur ès Lettres, Agrégé* of Philosophy and was for many years President of the *Centre Catholique des Intellectuels Français*. From 1939 to 1944 he was the director of the Institute of Philosophy, which he himself founded, at the University of Ankara. Professor of Humanities at the University of Lille from 1947, he became its Dean in 1955. Simultaneously he directed the *École Pratique des Hautes Études*, Paris. He devoted himself to a scientific study of Orientalism from about 1938. He first visited India in 1935-6. Later he was Cultural Adviser to the French Consul General in Calcutta and to the French Ambassador in Delhi. He was Delegate of UNESCO to the All-India Philosophical Congress held in Calcutta in 1950. He has also frequently visited India for one or other of the philosophical congresses. One of his favourite themes is non-violence and the practical philosophy of Gandhi. Even during one of his recent visits to India, he insisted that India had to choose between Marxism and the philosophy of Gandhi.² At least in the French speaking world Lacombe is considered a great authority on Hinduism.

His works—since they are too many to be listed here, we refer the reader to the Bibliography—witness to his deep love and appreciation of the “religious wisdom” of India, and they give the impression that he is, so to speak, ‘obsessed’ by India and

her religious spirit. He insists, however, that one should not be interested in India and her religious culture from a dissatisfaction with western culture and Christianity or from a prejudiced view that the East is spiritual and the West is materialistic, but from a genuine intellectual honesty and christian charity which can recognize, assume and assimilate values wherever they are found.³ It is therefore the cry of a friend and a devoted catholic that we hear at the conclusion of one of his articles: "Let us ask of God that India be for Christ. Let us also pray that her entry into the visible Church be not after a cataclysm which would destroy the deepest and the purest of her indianity".⁴

What we propose to do is briefly to outline Lacombe's idea of religious dialogue within the wider context of encounter of religions and the 'difficulties' involved in such an encounter. Finally we shall expose his approach to Hinduism.

I. THE MEANING OF ENCOUNTER OF RELIGIONS ACCORDING TO PROF. LACOMBE

One of the basic attitudes in any religious encounter is that each partner be authentic and live his religion intensely.⁵ An attitude of inferiority or superiority is no help. Nor does the dissatisfaction with one's own religion or a false appreciation of the other religion lead to a meaningful meeting of religions. Behind the specification of 'eastern' and 'western' is our quality of being man: it is on that level that we can meet the other person. There is no denying that there is enrichment in encountering one another's particularities, but we should go beneath these and meet the person himself. This exchange demands on the part of the philosophers and theologians of both sides a spirit of openness and detachment.

A further important requirement is the desire to "know and recognize" the dialogue partner in his otherness, that is to say, just as he is, just as God, nature and history have made him. Good-will and sympathy alone are not enough. Lacombe deplors our ignorance of Oriental religions and cultures, in spite of the increased opportunities and facilities. We should be able to read their Sacred Scriptures and understand even their literal meaning so that we can rightly appreciate the other in his otherness and totality.

Lacombe envisages, besides these general attitudes applicable to all, a few that would apply especially to the missionary.⁶ The messenger of Christ, sent to his brothers as it were from 'outside', forgets his attachments to his country and cultural origin so that he may not in any way obscure the transcendence of the message he preaches, and that he may be fully at the service of charity. For he is not at the service of, nor the messenger of, any particular culture or civilisation, but the announcer of a transcendent message—the message of God's saving act in Christ, the God-Man. That is, he brings to the East not a western Christianity, but simply the message of Christ, in whom alone is the salvation of every man, irrespective of culture or race. The universality and transcendence of the christian faith are not based on any privilege of place, time, or the chosen messengers of the Good News, but on the God-Man, the "sacrament of our encounter with God". The missionary, remaining faithful to the exigencies of the message he preaches, should know how to render full justice to the values of the religion and culture with which he wants to enter into contact, for he respects the secret workings of God in them. He should take care to vivify and fulfil the "anticipations of the christian life" (*pierres d'attente de la vie chrétienne*) which are found in these religions and cultures, so that the message he announces would appear as 'uttered' from 'within', and thus form an authentically indigenous catholicism.

Having considered the general attitude in an encounter of religions, and the attitude of a missionary towards a non-christian religion, we shall now briefly expose Lacombe's ideas on dialogue in the strict sense of the word. There are two basic aspects in Lacombe's understanding of a dialogue: it is an exchange of love and hence it is an end in itself and may not be used for anything other than itself; secondly, the christian is conscious of, and the dialogue partner is made aware of, his real identity, namely, he is the bearer of a transcendent message.

Answering a Buddhist interlocutor, Lacombe once said that a dialogue was not for anything other than itself; it was meant neither to win the favour of others, nor to constitute a common front against atheism and contemporary unbelief. But it is "an exchange of love, which we, christians, believe is supernaturally motivated",⁷ for it is the charity of Christ that urges us on to seek His presence in others and in other religions. It

is not the spirit of a conqueror nor of a propagandist that should animate a christian when he meets a non-christian, but the redeeming love of Christ which wants all men to come to the knowledge of the Truth. If in the past an attitude of indifference and even of hostility prevailed between christians and members of other religions, today it is a desire for mutual understanding and love, for collaboration in common works that should take its place. An attitude of reserve is replaced by a desire to grow in knowledge and love, because that is the starting point for a meeting of persons in depth, and is the first step to a properly religious dialogue. Lacombe makes a distinction between a "human dialogue" and a "properly religious dialogue": the first must grow into the second, for any interpersonal encounter in depth should lead to a religious encounter since that is most basic to man, and a meeting that does not touch that central sphere of man's life does not achieve a real meeting of persons.

So, if an inter-religious dialogue from the point of view of the christian is a supernaturally motivated exchange of love, then it is obvious that it cannot be used for anything other than itself, for love is not a means, but an end. It would be dishonesty to *use* one's friendship for another person for any purpose other than itself: growth in love and knowledge. It cannot, therefore be a *means* for conversion, and our inter-religious dialogue partner should be aware that our aim is not to use this dialogue as a new method of conversion work; the fact is that in India many hindus do think this is a new tactic.⁸ When such a dialogue is motivated by disinterested supernatural love and achieves an exchange between men of different faiths, it finds its *raison d'être* in itself.

To counter the possible misinterpretation of "*magis amica veritas*" and the false impression that dialogue is *merely* a friendship, Lacombe insists on another aspect of the dialogue: the christian should be known for what he is. An inter-religious dialogue would be a lie if it did not imply an *explicit recognition* by the christian partner of his obligation to witness to and proclaim the transcendence of the christian message. Hence a christian cannot carry on a religious dialogue without some day being faced with the inescapable demand laid on every christian of proclaiming the Good News. Hence if we say that dialogue is not *for converting*, it should all the same be said that the christian—granting all discretion, respect and sense of the opportune

moment—confesses that he is the bearer of a unique message and a time might come when he would have to manifest it. For the claim of the transcendent message in itself (objective truth) and of the personal belief of the christian (subjective truth) demand that my partner know what I am: namely, the unworthy and imperfect bearer of a transcendent message. The message is different from the messenger.

How are these two exigencies in a dialogue reconciled? Precisely in charity because true charity is truth. It implies a gift of the "truth of Christ", from a purely unselfish supernatural charity, which is the total gift of the self: so also of what is most vital to the christian, namely, his belief in Christ; what Christ means to him. This communication of love which 'gives' Christ to the partner is not to be understood as conversion work, but the sharing of what is most central to the christian.⁹

Lacombe feels that it is hard to express these ideas in precise formulas especially in face of what *Ecclesiam suam* says.¹⁰ But he is certain that the encyclical need not be understood as conveying a meaning he has rejected. The dialogue may mean a preparation from God's point of view, for it is God who inspires both the dialogue and the mission of the Church. In Him this is only one moment of love which aims at the spread of the Good News of His love for men.

Before we conclude this section a word should be said about what Lacombe calls a "silent dialogue". There is always a great deal of danger of misunderstanding on both sides when we speak with a hindu. Even if we use his own language we have no certainty that we shall succeed in expressing ourselves accurately. It may often be necessary to hold a "silent dialogue without words", a "heart to heart" communication without words by which we can make up for the "defect" of the language. Knowledge is a prerequisite but there must also be much charity, a spirit of humility by which we recognise that we are only servants of the News and not its masters, and a great spirit of Faith which acknowledges that God is greater than ourselves and that He manifests Himself to whom He wills in the way He wills. Thus we should be eager to look for His presence wherever it is to be found. This dialogue of silence which through a life of faith and love prepares the way for God's visitation, is a real meeting of persons and a real dialogue.¹¹

II. 'DIFFICULTIES' IN MEETING HINDUISM

In some of his articles,¹² Lacombe deals with some of the problems we shall have to face when we encounter Hinduism. We may call them "factors which must be taken into account", or for brevity's sake, 'difficulties' in meeting Hinduism.

The agelessness of Hinduism: Hindus take pride in the belief that their religion is ageless, that is, "without a beginning" and "without a human author", hence superior to all religions which claim a history and a historical founder.¹³ A hindu who is persuaded that he represents humanity's most ancient religion and its future, and believes in the "timeless" value of his religion, can hardly accept the christian claim that Christianity, which was founded on a historic contingent event scarcely two thousand years ago, and which holds out against atheism and secularism only with difficulty, possesses the "words of eternal life". A very orthodox hindu would even say that his religion is the chief source of all religions, of civilisation and of all knowledge. Even this aspect is not without a positive value for us christians, as it is a witness to the religious condition of humanity before the promise to Abraham, the Covenant at Sinai and the New Covenant.

Hinduism is not easily definable: First of all, the word *Dharma* is not adequately translated by the word Religion.¹⁴ On the doctrinal plane we know that in spite of the fact that there are a few general points of common 'belief' like the authority of the Vedas, the *Karma-Samsāra*, the need for liberation, Hinduism is free of all 'dogmas' in the christian sense of the word.¹⁵ To a hindu who gives the utmost importance to experience, the idea of a 'messenger' who has to announce the Word in the name of another, would not seem very important. Besides, Hinduism holds within its fold many strata of people and beliefs: a ritualistic popular religion, and a higher stratum of believers including theists and non-dualists. Sometimes in one and the same person these different levels may be found together. For all hindus, myths, beliefs and theologies are only of relative value, as they cannot really express the absolute,¹⁶ and may disappear when spiritual experience and realisation of the true nature of man and of the Supreme Being are attained. When christians, on the other hand, speak of 'unchanging' dogmas, truths and doctrines, the hindu attributes this attitude to their spirit of intolerance.

The spirit of tolerance-intolerance: Hindus will read our Scriptures but, owing to the apparent similarities, will fail to notice the differences, and the transcendence of the christian message will not be noticed. A people who is "impatient with differences" will be uneasy at our claiming an irreducible originality for our Faith and message. A hindu will gladly accept the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, but will attribute our belief in the "continuity" between the Old and New Testaments to a "closed mentality".¹⁷ It goes without saying that a hindu who believes in the multiplicity of avatars (Gita, IV, 8, 5) would consider the Incarnation of Christ¹⁸ as one of the many avatars but the idea of a unique, once-and-for-all Incarnation would be taken for intolerance and dogmatism. Contrary to this spirit of intolerance the hindu claims to possess a spirit of tolerance, openness and acceptance of all religious traditions.¹⁹

These are some of the factors which, according to Prof. Lacombe, we have to keep in mind if we wish to enter into any relation with Hinduism.

III. PROFESSOR LACOMBE AND THE ÉLAN OF HINDUISM

Thanks to his genuine love for India and the Church in India, Lacombe keeps himself informed of all that has been and is being done by way of encountering Hinduism. In several of his articles²⁰ he studies all the attempts made in the past at a "baptism of the brahmanic wisdom and culture". He discusses at length the approaches of Brahmabandhav Upadhyay, Father Johanns and *The Light of the East* and Abbé Monchanin. He grants that these methods are still valuable and should be continued and completed.

Years ago Lacombe considered the various approaches to Hinduism as attempts at penetrating the hindu philosophy to find points of insertion, the "stepping stones" which would serve the *philosophia perennis* and christian doctrines. In his recent writings he considers these approaches more explicitly from the point of view of the contribution Hinduism can make to Christianity and humanity in general. He inquires how the age-old metaphysical and spiritual genius of India could be a providential occasion for an enrichment of christian reflection. He holds that it would not be right to try to develop any one system in its "particularity", but we should try to integrate truths and

values which Indian wisdom contains into the totality of christian wisdom by an "act of creative assimilation". He would repudiate, then, the tendency of those who, holding a theological and philosophical pluralism, would demand that Indian Christianity must achieve a doctrinal synthesis as close as possible to the mental and spiritual structures of traditional Hinduism.²¹ Lacombe holds that this would imply a philosophy of relativism with regard to the structures and values in which the Faith is to become incarnate. It would seem to build up a "parallel system" of theology, independent of existing christian theologies, on the pattern of traditional Hinduism.

A second tendency, one to which Lacombe would subscribe, is that which holds that the Indian Christian theology and philosophy must grow by an unbroken organic growth within a church in expansion.²² As living members of a living organism the philosopher and the theologian have the necessary assimilative power to welcome and situate in the correct perspective the partial truths and values that Indian religious thought possesses. This approach, while insisting on the permanency of human reason, is attentive to human subjective variations. The criterion of doctrine, Lacombe holds, is "truth" which does not accommodate itself to the changing demands of subjectivity.

The new christian theology which India would construct would not break away from the past, nor replace the old system, but "vitaly and formally" continue it. Universality must here be preferred to any "closed up originality". Lacombe, however, does not deny the freedom of "invention and expression on theological and philosophical planes" according to the subjective dispositions of different cultures and nations, but he insists again that the "inner structure of wisdom in as much as it is a doctrine of truth, does not permit any accommodation to the particularities of time and space".²³ Just as Greek thought and metaphysics was "reformed" and purified and transformed before it became an instrument of christian thought, so too should Indian thought systems and metaphysics be 'purified' and transformed, not merely be taken just as they are. Some of the key concepts of christian theology, like Person, Nature, Logos, already existed in Greek philosophy, yet their meaning has been changed to accommodate them to the needs of the christian faith. Hence Lacombe insists that the new theology should not go in for mere originality, but "formally and vitaly continue the old". Lacombe reacts against those who try to eliminate all that is

old in favour of originality and insists on the demands of "truth in itself" in a rather abstract manner without appreciating enough the "incarnational" character of truth. For though there is an intellectual content independent of cultural and social milieu, it is not without a social and cultural milieu that this truth is 'born'.

If Lacombe is more reserved with regard to theological and philosophical plurality, he would whole-heartedly wish for an indigenous christian art, 'for it will be the proof of a marvellous flowering of the vitality of the catholic communities of India',²⁴ and it would be India's original contribution to the rich orchestration of the *Una Sancta*.

Lacombe proposes a method to bring about, by discovering new aspects and new expressions, a new Indian theology without break with the past, in an expanding and growing Church. The method he suggests is not in opposition to those proposed by Fr. Johanns and others but as a continuation and completion of them. The method he proposes

does not begin with fully elaborated Indian doctrines but attempts rather a return to the sources..., to the genuine sources of Indian spirituality. It strives to retrace mentally the path which, covering the great stages of its history and gathering together its most precious achievements would bring it to the threshold of an authentic indo-christian synthesis, avoiding the errors and deviations of the past.²⁵

He feels that though a doctrinal confrontation will be necessary at some time or other, we must first find out the very 'vital impulse', *élan*, prior to all its expressions and try a direct christian encounter with that *élan*. A historian who studies the spiritual development of India as a whole, is carried back to the era of the most ancient upanishads and sees a powerful tide set in motion whose waves unceasingly flood the Indian soil even to this day. Not all that is in it is pure and equally valuable, but it manifests a certain profound unity which is its animating force. We should examine this "irrepressible" (*incoercible*) *élan* in order to appreciate its significance, withholding our judgements on the great doctrinal structures to which it has given rise. There is no denying the value of these systems, but since the *élan* is prior to all its expressions we should evaluate it in itself. As we go to this source we shall perhaps perceive better how christian

doctrines may have an authentically Indian context, and—this is the second inseparable aspect of Lacombe's approach—discover in the Indian traditions elements which have a universal value. If we make a few of these values like non-violence stand the test of universality,²⁶ we should be rendering Hinduism the best homage possible, and at the same time preparing the possibility of a living synthesis between the theological virtue of Faith and the discoveries of Indian spirituality. In fact these two aspects are inseparably related and perhaps the whole approach can be made from their inseparability: what Hinduism can bring to Christianity and to universal culture. It is obvious that for Lacombe the transcendence of the christian message should always remain clearly and consciously present to anyone entering upon the encounter of religions.

1) *Why not a doctrinal encounter?*

As a preliminary to enquiring about the *élan*, it is important to know why Lacombe thinks that a direct confrontation with Hinduism *starting* with formulated doctrines is undesirable and impossible. In addition to what we have said in the section 'difficulties', we may refer to an example he gives. The Indian religions are Wisdoms, Ways and Doctrines of salvation: a conflict is inevitable, for in Christianity there are no 'ways' of salvation but only one Way, Jesus Christ. Furthermore, the very meaning of the word "salvation" will be a cause of dispute.²⁷ There is yet another more profound reason why we must go beyond or *beneath* any expressions.

We know that for all our theological and philosophical efforts we never reach the fulness of the statements of the Old and New Testaments. We always fall behind Revelation in our formulation of it.²⁸ So too non-Christians fall short of their valuable experiences of God in their expressions of them: owing to the secret presence and action of God in their lives they might go much beyond what they themselves tell us and what their explicit formulations permit us to understand. In its development over the centuries Hinduism has acquired elements of great positive value, elements which are *naturaliter christiana* but at the same time other elements which are objectionable. Hence we shall have to go beneath the expressions to their source to encounter the *élan* which has been at work during these centuries.

2) *Spirituality of immanence*

Though Indian spirituality manifests in its history a profound unity, there is in it an "intrinsic plurality", a diversity: we can detect various currents and must take note of all of them in order to have an appreciation of this spirituality in its fulness. One of the major currents which carry Hinduism forward may be called a "spirituality of immanence". Among most of the great teachers of Hinduism the emphasis is on "immanence of the spirit to itself". What India looks for through the whole of its history is an unveiled and direct experience of our innermost being at its very source.²⁹ What we propose to do in this section is not to dwell on the techniques like Tantrism or Yoga designed to lead a person to such an experience of the immanence of the spirit, but to consider the experience itself and see the positive bearing it can have on Christianity.

The final state of Yoga experience is described by Lacombe as: "an *enstasis* of the act of knowing in the act of existing, a closing of the subject on itself, a metaphysical isolation, a pure perception of the self beyond all differentiation and all relativity".³⁰ It is the liberation of the pure Spirit from all that 'hides' it on the psychic and material levels, restoring it to its primordial liberty to lead it to an existential experience of the most intimate reality of the Self, of our being.³¹ This *enstasis* in the act of existence may be considered metaphysically to be a descent into the ontological source of goodness which the creator has opened in the very being of the creature. It is also a consenting to a "night of the soul" since the soul 'realises' herself only by the rejection of the mental word, the prism of our interior light. Two topics are relevant here: that this experience of immanence is a "natural spirituality" or "natural mysticism" consequent upon man's nature and, secondly, that it has a positive value. We shall leave "natural mysticism" aside for the present.

a) *Values of a "spirituality of immanence"*

A comparison with the great currents of christian spirituality will suffice to convince us that this spirituality of immanence is not without some positive value in itself and for the christian. St Augustine tells us that in order to arrive at a freely-given experience of God, it is right and legitimate to pass through the stage of the "*memoria sui*" the intimate and immanent experi-

ence of the self. For St Augustine the *memoria sui* is not yet the *memoria Dei*.³² He thinks that mystical experience passes through the *memoria sui* to come to the *memoria Dei*, which implies that such an experience of immanent spirituality has a definite value. Hence confronting christian tradition with Indian tradition we find in the latter an immanent spirituality of the "natural order" which is of great importance for humanity as it has inspired poets and metaphysicians.

Referring to India, Lacombe says that she has clearly seen that between an experience of spirituality understood in the above sense, and a poetic experience, there is not an absolute difference.³³ A comparison of data reveals their profound kinship, the need of understanding their significance in order to have a complete knowledge of the powers and possibilities of the human spirit and an understanding of the transcendence of christian spiritual experience or of christian spirituality. Words like spirituality, mystic experience, spiritual experience we use analogically: it is impossible to express spiritual experiences univocally.

The positive value of Indian spirituality of immanence may further be gathered both from a phenomenological approach which considers the visible fruits, and from a metaphysical analysis.

Since the experience characteristic of the "natural mysticism of immanence" reaches the ontological source of our being, it ought to have some good fruits though dangers may be present in it. In fact, when we look into the history of Indian spirituality we notice that it has very positive contributions for humanity: virtues like non-violence and its corollaries like generosity, compassion, goodwill are not merely of the moral order, but are cosmic in the sense that they arise from the very ground of our human soul, which is purified and led to the very source of being, but only if it first in its infinite intentional capacity embraces the very cosmos.³⁴ Such an experience is a plunge into the depths of the "silence of being", of total generosity, touching far more than exterior relations with men and society. It is a rediscovery of the "religious instinct", of the spiritual tendency engraved by God in the human soul. India provides a favourable climate for it. Hence it is not surprising that India is so manifestly religious in its behaviour. This last statement brings us to the second consideration, how it is metaphysically possible for this experience to be an openness to the Absolute and also to grace.

Without denying the possibility of a person considering the spiritual soul as an incommunicable solitary monad and remaining closed upon it, recognising nothing beyond it, we may say that this experience can be and often is in radical continuity with an ontological love of God the creator, engraved in the very substance of the human being, linked to its instinct of self-preservation, possessing a dynamism anterior to all elicited love and underlying the whole order of faculties and operative acts.³⁵ For it is at this point of the metaphysical depths of one's being that the presence of divine immensity allows itself to be 'sensed', though not in itself. Without ceasing to love self fundamentally, the soul is carried by a metaphysical dynamism which makes her love God more than herself by an ontological love for God prior to every act of knowledge and freedom. Prof. Lacombe here depends on St. Thomas:

Since then the good, taken quite universally, is God himself, and since all angels, all men and all other creatures exist as contained within that good—because every creature, precisely in respect of what it is by nature, belongs to God—it follows that the instinctive natural love of each angel and each man is for God first of all and for God more than for self....³⁶

On the ontological level, on the level of the most profound dynamism, man loves God more than himself, because He is absolute Goodness, Goodness itself, the source of his existence; and as universal Goodness, God's goodness contains, and is the term of, all particular goodnesses at which particular creatures aim. In this sense creatures love Him more than themselves. But on this ontological level our basic love for ourselves is not distinct from this love of God above all things, because there intervenes no choice, no judgement, and it is identical with the act of existence. St. Thomas himself gives the example of the hand which would, without ceasing to love itself, ward off a blow that would endanger the body as a whole.³⁷ Lacombe concludes that we may call the double but inseparable love incorporated in our very substance a "disinterested love of the self". Perhaps the idea of a love of God above all else is expressed in the *Brahadāraṇyaka Up.* II 4: love things for the sake of the Self. But for a philosophy that does not possess the notion of *creatio ex nihilo* it is quite natural to mistake this vehement basic love of nature which clamours for its God, for a desire "to be God". If this spirituality of immanence remains open, if it

does not enclose itself in self-sufficiency, then it is permeable to grace, to an authentic presence of transcendence.

b) *Spirituality of immanence and christian spirituality.*

Much might be said of a direct impact of the spirituality of immanence on christian prayer and christian spirituality, but we can do no more here than refer to this theme. We know that yoga is not limited to any doctrinal system, as it could and is being used by diverse 'schools' like advaita, bhakti and even by 'atheists'. We also know that in itself it does not call for grace, though grace is not incompatible with it. It is obvious, at any rate, that for an exploration into the physical and psychological conditions of prayer, a knowledge of yoga could be of great service and the possibility of a christian yoga cannot be rejected *a priori*.³⁸

Going further, Lacombe asks whether this "natural mysticism" purified of all its dross cannot be a valuable preparation for a perfect christian life. "We do not see", he says, "why a good person, matured by the secret presence and action of grace, could not live a particularly purified yoga discipline, as a vicarious exercise of genuine spiritual life?"³⁹ Thanks to his growing fidelity to grace he would go beyond the proper aims of a natural mysticism and enter into an experience animated by implicit faith, even though the Christic source of it might remain masked. As we have seen the experience of immanence is permeable to grace if there is openness; hence it is permissible to think that Christic grace, present everywhere and offered to all, can assume such an experience as a valid preparation of the soul for a visitation of the living God. Just as supernatural mysticism is God's gift to a humble soul, the efforts of the yogi through the active cultivation of the powers of his spirit, mental recollection and the exaltation of the intuitive understanding, can be freely taken up by God to lead the soul to an authentic experience of Himself. In the case of a christian it is possible that owing to the explicit desire of the supernatural and the christian forms of prayer, the element of 'natural mysticism' would be more hidden and grace would direct this natural élan to its legitimate end. It should be remembered however, especially for the use of yoga in christian spirituality, that the Church does not desire to destroy any value that has come to be through nature and culture and that she must use a 'language' which the people

can understand, but she must guard the Message she is entrusted with untarnished by any easy "assimilation and confusion". Apart from these observations, Lacombe does not take a position on these matters because he feels that our knowledge of yoga is still limited and more research has to be done in this field.

3) *Spirituality of bhakti*

When Lacombe distinguishes two currents in Indian spirituality, he does so on a "descriptive level". In reality there is a great unity between the two. There is an element of immanence and an element of transcendence in the bhakti trend too. But bhakti in its higher stages emphasises rather the element of transcendence and the distinction between the soul and God. We cannot here make an exhaustive analysis of bhakti in its various stages, but we ought to say a few words on it to show Lacombe's appreciation of it.

Though etymologically the word bhakti means 'participation', applied to spirituality it means "a loving and total devotion (dedication) to the divinity, a devotion conditioned by grace from on high".⁴⁰ Its most striking characteristic is its personal note—a person to person relation: it is a spirituality of loving devotion to a personal God. God is ready to help the soul in its search for salvation. The way of bhakti is easier because it is more protected against pride than any other way. Grace for the bhakta, say Lacombe, is not only an extrinsic help, but also a 'participation' in the divine state by those chosen by God. Salvation for the bhakta by way of bhakti is higher than that by *jñāna* and the method of immanence. We may also allude to the fact that at least some of the bhaktas have a sense of sin and pardon by grace. "The love of God, very humble and very high, fervent and repentant: such is the most authentic 'way of devotion'",⁴¹ concludes Prof. Lacombe.

The spirituality of bhakti, according to him, at least in its higher stages, is different from the spirituality of immanence, for he says: "leaving aside the higher moments of the spirituality of bhakti, the ways of Indian spirituality are primarily ways of immanence".⁴² The reason is that here we find not merely an "ontological love" of God but a "spiritual, elicited" love of a personal God. But even here when the bhaktas try to express their experience of God, they become a prey to one or other of the systems, and sometimes even call themselves "emanated from

God", but their real attitude before God is no less an attitude of a creature. If the soul lovingly responds through the gift of the self to the personal God who comes to save her by His grace, should we not admit that in the most authentic cases like that of Tukaram, the Living God has visited the soul under the cover of anonymity and myth?⁴³ Besides, bhakti in the strict sense, where one is really "devoted to a personal God", has tried to preserve a certain metaphysical 'distance' between the soul and its Lord so that this 'distance' may be overcome—not abolished—by grace and by the loving response of the soul which this grace awakens in her.⁴⁴

Conclusion: These are the two "successive stages of Indian spirituality", and we may not omit either of them if we want to appreciate exactly its significance and value. The discovery of the real élan of Indian spirituality from its sources, prior to its expression or systematisation does not dispense us from a doctrinal confrontation, but an approach from the élan is less abrupt and prepares the way for a doctrinal 'theme-to-theme' encounter. Besides, this discovery makes us more aware of the great contribution that India can make to universal thought and to Christianity. For example, India's experience in mysticism enables us to profit from a comparative study of the stages of mysticism. We can also have a better understanding of Plotinus and Master Eckhart. Whatever be the value of such a method, Lacombe concludes, what is important for India and for humanity is that after her conversion to Christ, her great élan which has animated her for centuries should not dry up. It is the duty of christians to help preserve this élan which is under threat due to economic, social and political strains.⁴⁵

4) "Natural mysticism"

Before we sum up our findings, it remains for us to treat one of the problems raised during the exposé: that of natural mysticism. We do not, however, intend to deal with this immense problem exhaustively, but only to try to understand the position of Lacombe, who distinguishes between a mysticism of immanence which seeks an immanent term and one of transcendence whose term is a transcendent person. These terms are correlative and all mysticism implies a sort of transcendence, in the sense that there is a transcending of the empirical and the psychological, yet the transcendence we refer to is not this kind

of transcendence and the difference between the two types cannot be effaced.⁴⁶

The mysticism of immanence is called 'natural mysticism' in a metaphysical sense in contrast to the supernatural mysticism of grace. Lacombe acknowledges that it is not a very suitable term, but is used for lack of a better word and in analogy with the supernatural mysticism. This experience of the Self in the very act of existence is based on the 'spirituality' of the soul, on its tendency towards the absolute. It may not be classified as mere meditation, philosophical reflexion etc, but it is 'natural' in the sense that it is inscribed within the limits and possibilities of human nature and is by itself incapable of attaining God in Himself. What is essential in this mysticism is the importance given to the dimension of interiority, the elimination of all mental construction and the immediate perception of the soul by itself not in its individual acts but in the very act of existing. The experience is obtainable through human efforts and techniques. It may also admit grace as a possible stage toward the final experience. Hence Lacombe says that in spite of the fact that this mysticism makes 'use' of the notion of grace, and in its way of purification of the soul and in its notion of interiorisation has similarities with the supernatural mysticism of grace, nonetheless the difference between the two types is great.⁴⁷ For the mysticism of grace is eminently personal, Christic and hence Trinitarian and is entirely a gift unobtainable through any technique. The difference between the two types is well brought out in this description by Lacombe:

In natural mysticism, there is an experience of the immanent spirituality of the human soul, and of the metaphysical effects worked by the creative divine presence; (whereas) in supernatural mysticism, there is an experience of the inner life of God, graciously communicated and grasped through the mediation of Charity.⁴⁸

Supernatural mysticism therefore, is explicitly related to Christ and essentially a free gift of the creator to a humble soul, in the context of an intense religious life of faith and charity.

It is commonly accepted by authors that it is within the powers of man's spiritual nature to have a "fruitive experience of the absolute",⁴⁹ as we shall see presently. It may be proper first to refer to one classical writer, Jan Ruysbroeck. The technique of emptying the mind of all images was always con-

sidered a necessary condition for the development of mystical prayer. It was however to be only a preparation for the reception of the gift of the infused knowledge and love of God. Jan Ruysbroeck speaks of a "rest of the soul" that is purely 'natural' because it is not induced by the action of the Spirit, but is something that the human spirit can by itself enter into. He speaks, further, of the danger of such emptying the mind of all thoughts and images. What interests us here is that an experience similar to the type mentioned by Lacombe as 'natural mysticism' is considered possible by Ruysbroeck.⁵⁰

Turning to modern authors we may refer to H. de Lubac who says: "mystic aspiration is inherent to human nature, since man is made for that union."⁵¹ Many catholic theologians accept, besides different types of mystical experiences, a variety even of those that belong to the 'orthodox type' of catholic mysticism. This variety is not without a basic unity, since there is a basic structure common to all spiritual experiences, as Father C. A. Bernard shows in *Le Projet Spirituel*.⁵² Let us however take a closer look at the thesis of J. Maritain and Gardet; they form one school with Lacombe.⁵³

All agree that such an experience is based on the 'spirituality' of the soul, its natural tendency to the Absolute. Gardet says that it is not a reflexive knowledge of one's psychic or moral self but it is a transcending of the subjectivity perceived as such, a tending towards the Absolute whose sign it is. This 'going beyond' subjectivity does not mean a going 'outside' of the self, but to the very depths of being, for if such an experience is a true experience of the self, then it attains the very act of existing in the deepest depths of being. But since man is a creature, it will be as a created being that he will experience such a pure substantial existence, shot through with the creative influx of God. The élan towards the self, and in and through it obscurely to the Source of being, is natural, that is, man does not need any help beyond what he is capable of by himself.⁵⁴

Maritain treats the Yoga experience more metaphysically and holds that it is primarily a "meta-philosophic"⁵⁵ experience of the substantial *esse* of the soul. The soul by emptying itself of all images and representations, and through an act of abolishing all actions, reduces itself to an auto-intellection, but attains not its essence but its existence. This experience is distinct from the intellectual intuition of being, which is a knowledge through

intellectual connaturality to reality as conceptualisable, abstractive, eidetic and expressible in a mental word. Intuition is based on the intellect's natural tendency to its proper object, being, and its desire to 'see' its prime cause; whereas the natural mystical experience of which Maritain speaks is obtained through the intellectual connaturality to reality which is non-conceptualisable and through an intellection which is supra or para conceptual. It is the culmination of a tendency which is more basic and profound, a tendency of the whole being to its Source, not merely of one faculty as in intuition; it is like the 'natural love' of a part for the whole. The question has to be faced how this experience of the act of existence is an experience of the absolute, for without some absolute we may not speak of a mystical experience.⁵⁶ Maritain argues that it is a fruitive experience of the absolute, "of that absolute which is the substantial *esse* of the soul, and in and through it, of the divine absolute",⁵⁷ as the cause of being and not as He is in Himself. In the experience of the act of existence, God is reached by the same act and simultaneously "through his works", though indirectly, for God is "known" here only in His effect. One may speak of a 'contact' with the absolute, a contact implied in the very act of the immediate experience of the self, but it is not an experience of the "depths of God", of the God-ness.

Maritain, Gardet and de Lubac along with Lacombe admit that the mysticism of immanence, the experience of the 'absolute' in and through the spiritual élan of the soul is not supernatural.⁵⁸ Henri de Lubac expresses the difference between christian mysticism and non-christian mysticism in a striking manner: "Christian mystical experience is a deepening not of the Self but of Faith."⁵⁹ Christian interiority is not, and never can be, a "pure interiority", for the more it sinks into itself, the more it comprises the intentional movement which carries the mystic beyond himself.

IV. SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

One of the major contributions of Lacombe's approach to Hinduism is what might be called an object-lesson, namely, his profound study and personal assimilation of Hinduism, resulting in a genuine appreciation of its riches and the values it offers to the Church and for humanity, and at the same time, a deep, personal

commitment to the Church and to her teaching in all its transcendence. He holds that the partners of a dialogue must be true to themselves and should accept each other in their 'otherness', hence his emphasis that we should know Hinduism thoroughly and at the same time remain very faithful to the exigencies of the message of Christianity, allowing no syncretism or exclusivism but openness and acceptance.

A dialogue with Hinduism, which is an exchange of love motivated by the charity of Christ, though difficult, offers a unique chance. Lacombe willingly acknowledges the value of the diverse methods attempted so far and grants that a doctrinal approach on the level of the religions' content is useful and should be continued. We should work towards a doctrinal synthesis, towards an authentically indo-christian philosophy and theology assimilating the positive values of Hinduism. But such assimilation should begin not at the level of formulated doctrines, but prior to formulations, at the level of the *élan*. There we discover two trends: distinct, though intimately united, a spirituality of *bhakti* and loving devotion to a personal God, and another, a spirituality of immanence or what Lacombe calls "natural mysticism of immanence". Lacombe clearly distinguishes the spirituality of the *bhaktas* at its higher stages from the spirituality of immanence, but it is not clear whether he considers it on equal terms with the 'spirituality of the saints', as he should, since there is the presence of grace in it. In one place he says: "We believe that the Indian example is richer yet and that *bhakti* in what is essential and pure in it, realises a passage from natural spirituality to supernatural spirituality,"⁶⁰ but not of the same "type" as the christian economy. What is meant is that since the christian economy implies the Sacraments and the like, the "supernatural spirituality" of the *bhaktas* is of a different 'type'. It needs to be distinguished from the explicitly Christic and Trinitarian spirituality and mysticism, whatever name one may give it. We have spent more time on the spirituality of immanence than on that of *bhakti* for obvious reasons, for *bhakti* in its higher stages is close to Christianity and its value for christian life is obvious. But it is the aim of Lacombe, it seems to me, to establish that even the experience of immanence is of value for an indo-christian theology and spirituality. It is of value to humanity not only for its 'fruits' like non-violence, but also for its own intrinsic values. It brings to Christianity elements of great importance like the as-

pect of interiority, recollection and silence and it is a valid preparation for an authentic christian spirituality. Hence we may say that the approach of Lacombe is made from the point of view of Hinduism's contribution to Christianity and to universal culture.

The idea of encountering Hinduism beyond and beneath all its doctrinal systems and expressions of its spiritual experience is necessarily good for there we encounter the hindu at his "meeting point" with God, but it is hard to formulate this approach in precise words. Lacombe does not explain what he means by *élan*. Here we might attempt an explanation. Since Lacombe holds that the mysticism of immanence is open to grace, and since we may judge the tree from its fruits, we may say that at least in some cases the so called 'experience of immanence' does not stop with the self but is open to the Absolute and there is an experience of the Absolute, as a free gift, even though the yogi may not be aware of it being a gift. We shall apply this notion of the *élan* and its expression to mysticism in general, but with explicit reference to the 'experience of immanence' which is open to God, and hence in which there is presumably an experience of the Absolute. *Élan* can be taken on an ontic level and on the conscious level: on the ontic level it is the natural dynamism imprinted on human nature by the Creator—the tendency towards its final Good and End. But this tendency at this level is inexpressible even to the self and it is 'determinate' only in as much as a human person is determinate at that ontic level: it is the tendency of this particular person. Lacombe does not refer to the *élan* only on this level but also on the conscious level, for he says that in the totality of the spiritual development of India, in spite of its diversity, there is a certain "deep unity which is its animating force. It is this almost irrepressible *élan* that has to be examined". He further says that the historian is struck by the great religious *élan* which spans the history of Hinduism. It is therefore the animating force which has given unity to the whole of India's quest for God; it is almost incoercible, it is what the historian studies. It is something that can be examined, observed: hence we may conclude that Lacombe considers the *élan* not merely at the ontic level but at the conscious level too.

Now we must consider the *élan* at the conscious, experienced level. Here we distinguished two 'moments' on the conscious level of the experience. We may speak of a 'first moment' which

is nothing more than a replica of the ontic élan on the conscious level, but unexpressed even to the self. The experience is 'determinate', in so far as it is the experience of this particular person, it is the experience of the 'touch of God' on this person—hence personal and distinct. But it is not distinct in the sense of different types of experiences like "theistic", "non-theistic"; the experience is 'true' as there is no possibility of any falsity coming in because as yet there is no judgement. But 'immediately', that is, in the same experience, consciousness tries to express to itself what it experiences (the inner word); here the experience becomes differentiated even at the level of the object, for we 'name' the 'unnamable'. The experience at this level is already 'qualified' and 'diversified' and the third stage is verbalisation in which artistic and linguistic expressions are given to the 'inner word' already uttered in the experience itself. It follows the pattern of the 'inner word' and the thought pattern of the person, but here there is the possibility of greater inadequacy between the experience and the expression.

The reason for holding this view is the conviction that the mystics have an experience of God, not merely of the *idea* of God. The experience of the Absolute in the last analysis, should be one of unity, because it is an experience of Reality. The Absolute is the whole of Reality which alone 'allows' other beings to be, without adding to itself, and in that sense all beings are an affirmation of this Totality, of this Unity; so that when I, who share in it, experience this Reality the experience must be one of Unity (not necessarily of my unity with the Absolute, but of its own Unity, its own Oneness; since there must be forgetfulness of the self, 'de-centration' from the self, all that is experienced is the Other, the One).⁶¹ But as we have mentioned, there is a 'second moment', and here confusion is possible, for the Oneness that is experienced on the psychological plane could be transferred to the ontic level and one might deny the existence of the self even on the ontic level. Here there is an unlawful transference from the psychological plane to the ontic plane, whereas in orthodox christian mystics and the higher bhakti mystics the distinction of the two levels is preserved, and they do not affirm Oneness on the ontic level.

The experience of Master Eckhart may be referred to as an example. The general tendency of historians of spirituality is to rehabilitate him. Besides, certain aspects of his spirituality meet

the needs of men of today.⁶² When Eckhart says: "God and I are one", it is the expression of the fact of God's unity, for he says, "In God all multiplicity is absorbed in the unity; He is the One pure and simple, that none can either understand or express in words".⁶³ We may refer to a common human experience to throw light on what we are trying to express: the moment I meet an old friend whom I have not met for years, I seem to be so lost in him that I do not even advert to my state of mind; for a moment it is all he—he alone exists; only consequently do I reflect that I am very happy to meet him and the like; there is a moment when I am so lost that the 'I' disappears. Such, though infinitely different, seems to be the experience of the mystics whether they express themselves correctly or not. So unless there is a 'moment' when the Other is experienced as the Other independently of our ideas of Him, we can never claim to experience God, but can reach only our ideas of Him, a very poor substitute.

Now, returning to Lacombe, we may say that he refers to the *élan* at its experienced 'unexpressed' level (the 'first moment' we spoke of above) and also at the expressed level. He insists on the need of descending to the level of the non-expressed experienced *élan*, because precisely at this level there is the possibility, according to him, of an experience of the absolute in itself. The apophatic knowledge of the Eastern tradition also seems to refer to this experience beyond words resulting from a personal communion of man and God, a *participation* of man in the divinity which is a union without words.⁶⁴ The example Lacombe gives of Hallaj is applicable also to the case of the Yogi.

The case of Hallaj witnesses to the infinite liberality of divine love which, even outside the visible belonging to the Church of Christ, lavishes its sanctifying grace in a secret manner, and which does not seem to stop short of leading such souls as are specially faithful to its inner touch, to the unifying and divinising depths of supernatural mystic experience.⁶⁵

About the openness of Yoga experience to grace we have spoken earlier. We cannot disregard any of the three elements, *élan*, experience and expression. We shall have to encounter the hindu on the doctrinal, systematic level of expression of his experience, yet against the background of the knowledge of what he is try-

ing to express. Hence a knowledge of his experience even before its expression, at the level of the élan where he encounters God, is necessary. Then we shall be conscious that even when his expressions are inadequate and perhaps even objectionable to us, there is something of value in his experience which is an openness to grace and which can be directed to better expressions.

What Lacombe calls the *dialogue of silence* can be understood in the context of such an encounter in the depths of one's religious experience. It seems to me, he is speaking not about a dialogue of charity consisting of *acts* of charity, and therefore ultimately one of "noisy works", but of real silence, without words, without actions; akin to the prayer of silence St Teresa speaks of in the *Fourth Mansion*.⁶⁶ It is the presence of one person to another at the deepest religious level. An example may illustrate this. I hear that the mother of my most intimate friend is dead. I visit my friend, but I have nothing to tell him; I find I have nothing to say. In that 'sacred' situation no word is adequate to express what I should like to express, every word is superfluous. I sit by him, but that 'presence' 'speaks' volumes which will never be forgotten by him. There is a true heart-to-heart communication which is more significant, more communicative than any words. It seems to me that Lacombe refers precisely to this type of 'communion'; such a communication, however, is on the level of one's experience of God.

In conclusion we may say that while Lacombe fully appreciates the value of bhakti, he also insists on the meaningfulness of the experience of immanence. The religious experience of the self, and of the Absolute in and through the self, and of the Absolute in itself going beyond the sphere of a mere 'natural mysticism' is primarily an expression of God's fidelity to man, of God's bhakti to man; through the centuries it has been his way of 'touching' those who seek him. God has touched them precisely in and through His immanence which is transcendence itself, as Sankara realised. So it is right to think that since hindu spirituality has perceived the lofty aspect of the bhakti of God and of man, the cultivation of the spirituality of immanence can also lead the hindu to this faithful response in bhakti. Following the theology of his time, Lacombe is very cautious and guarded in his views on "christian yoga" and on the "visitation of the soul of the bhakta by God", but it is enough to say that

now the theologians have gone much beyond his stand which was necessarily conditioned by the times. I have myself used the terminology of Lacombe but it is necessary to state that as there is no one today in the purely 'natural' order, it is perhaps merely an academic question to speak of natural and supernatural mysticism. Where there is genuine prayer and genuine openness to God there is the experience of God given freely and gratuitously. The way of the spirituality of immanence has much to teach the christian to prepare him for this 'visitation' or 'touch' of God. But who is a true mystic, who has a true experience of God in himself—these are questions which could be adequately answered only by the mystic. The generality of men can 'judge' such men only from their works, 'fruits'. The value of Lacombe's approach to Hinduism lies not in the 'names' he gives to the two types of spirituality in Hinduism, but in appreciating the values of the two existing types, and in his balanced grasp of Hinduism. In the following chapter we shall say more on the need of entering into the hindu experience ourselves, as expounded by Dr. J-A Cuttat.

FOOT NOTES

Chapter II

The following abbreviations are used in this chapter :

EH = *Existence de l'Homme*, Desclée, 1951. *CPC* = *Chemins de l'Inde et philosophie chrétienne*, Paris, 1956. *RCH* = "Rencontre du christianisme avec l'hindouisme". *RR* = "La Rencontre des religions". *ESH* = "Elan spirituel de l'hindouisme". *BM* = "Le Brahmanisme", in *La Mystique et les mystiques*, Paris, 1965, p. 731-842. *MN* = "La Mystique naturelle dans l'Inde".

1. Cf. *Le nouveau dictionnaire national des contemporains*, 3rd ed. Paris, 1964, art. 'Olivier Lacombe'. Though born in Belgium, he is French. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Prof. Lacombe. In spite of his ill health and busy programme, he received me three times and clarified quite a few points; he also provided me with a number of off-prints of his writings.
2. Cf. *The Hindu*, Madras, 28 dec. 1970.
3. Cf. Lacombe, "Un exemple de mystique naturelle: l'Inde", in *Etudes Carmélitaines*, 23 (1938) 2, 140-151, esp. 150; "Apport de l'Inde à la civilisation universelle", in *Rhythmes du monde*, V (1957) 3-4, 278-281; *CPC*, 17-18, 21, 43.
4. Cf. *ESH*, 67.
5. Cf. *CPC*, 46, for this section see *RR*, 104-107; *EH*, 124ff; "Sagesse chrétienne et sagesse d'orient" in *Lumen Vitae*, IV (1949), 695-703, esp. 699f; *RCH*, 139-140. "Quelques aspects du problème de la culture et de l'humanisme en pays de mission" in *La Vie Intellectuelle*, 28 (1934) 3, 495-521, esp. 511.
6. The ideas presented in this paragraph are suggested in *CPC*, 12-13, 25-26.
7. Cf. *RR*, 105f. The whole of this section is based much on this article. Here we intend merely to expose the views of Lacombe and not to give a theology of dialogue.
8. "Many hindus are convinced that "dialogue" is only a new tactical device of the christians to convert hindus after the more aggressive open methods have failed", K. Klostermaier, "Hindu-Christian dialogue", in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, V (1968) 1, 21-45; quote, p. 26.
9. In *RCH*, 140 Lacombe says that the attitude he recommends enables the christian to offer the Truth, Christ, to his non-christian brother in a spirit of disinterested charity. What he intends seems to be that the same person may be engaged in 'dialogue' and in 'missionary work'. Though the missionary does not intend to *use* the dialogue for converting, it may in fact help prepare the person for the fuller truth of Christ.
10. Cf. *Ecclesiam Suam*, Eng. translation, CTS, London, 1965, no. 79, p. 45. The Pope envisages dialogue as a preparation for evangelisation in the strict sense.

11. RR, 117-118.
12. Cf. *ibid*, 107f; RCH, 134-142; BM, 768ff.
13. Cf. RCH, 134-5; Cf. also, D.S. Sarma : "The Hindu scriptures deal with ideal truth, and not with historical truth. Their validity does not depend on any historical fact", *A Primer of Hinduism*, 11. According to Dr. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, mysticism will be the religion of the future, and it will be a gift of hinduism to humanity, see, viii-ix, 304ff.
14. The correspondence between the word religion and *dharma* is only partial because the latter founds the social and cosmic order and at the same time refers to the spiritual dimension of human life. Cf. BM, 737.
15. Cf. *ibid*, 738. see also, D.S. Sarma, *op. cit*, 143; Renou, *Religions of Ancient India*, London, 1953: "Hinduism is not built on any canon or Gospel and....it has no founder or Dogma". 49. Prof. Zaehner shows that Hinduism is not altogether free of dogmas: see, "Dogma", in *Hibbert Journal*, 53 (1955) 9-18.
16. Cf. RCH, 137; Nikhilananda, *Hinduism*, 178f; Radhakrishnan, *op. cit*, 316f.
17. Cf. Lk. 24. 25-27; Acts 8. 34-35; RCH, 135. Dr. Radhakrishnan says that Christianity 'inherited' a sense of superiority and intolerance from the Jews who "invented the myth that only one religion could be true", *Eastern Religions*, p. 10.
18. I do not enter here into the problem of the relation between the words avatar and Incarnation, but take it in the usual, popular acceptation.
19. Cf. RCH, 135. It is a common thesis with most of the hindu authors that all religions are equal. Nikhilananda, for example, would say that we should not talk of "toleration" because that implies a sense of superiority, hence he would advocate "respect and positive acceptance", cf. *Hinduism*, 178f, esp. 193. But Sarma says: "Therefore with us toleration is not simply a stroke of policy but an article of faith. We look upon the whole world as a joint family..." *Primer*, 23. However the opinion of Murty is worth considering: "The view of Jaimini and Kumarila (acceptable to all authorities such as Sankara and Ramanuja) that the Vedic faith is exclusive shows that Hinduism is as exclusive as the semitic faiths and brooks no rivals. So modern exponents of Hinduism should make it explicit that such statements as "all religions are true" are made on their own authority, and do not represent the orthodox tradition, S. Murty, *Revelation and Reason*, Bombay, 1959, 219.
20. Cf. BM, 800. "La pensée catholique traditionnelle et l'hindouisme", in *Le Monde non-chrétien*, oct-dec. 1951. 387-401; "La prière chrétienne aux Indes", in *Ecclesia*, no. 166 (1963), 133-144; ESH, 58f; EH, 124f.
21. Cf. BM, 799; EH, 124-126.
22. BM, 799; see also, "L'Encyclique 'Humani Generis'," in *Recherches et débats*, no. 27 (1959), 83-89, esp. 88.

23. BM, 800. For the whole paragraph, see 799f.
24. *Ibid.*
25. ESH, 66.
26. What is intended here is that we must discern if some of these values have a bearing for humanity at large. Thus, for instance, on the philosophico-theological plane, the "fecundity of her metaphysical tradition" and her splendid intellectual vigour", and in the sphere of prayer her experience in the methods of prayer, methods by which she purifies and disposes men for prayer, her respect for silence and recollection. Cf. EH, 126-7; ESH, 60.
27. Cf. ESH, 66; "L'Eglise une et diverse" in *Semaines des Intellectuels Catholiques*, ed. Fayard, 1961, 159-167, esp. 165.
28. Cf. RR, 109f; we have only to refer to the writings of christian mystics to realise the difficulty they feel in expressing their own experiences. Cf. for example, St Teresa, *Complete Works*, transl. by Allison Peers, London, 1963, vol. I, 119.
29. Cf. Lacombe, "Approches negatives de l'absolu dans la pensée Indienne", in *Table Ronde*, no. 182 (1963) 46-50, esp. 49.
30. "La Mystique naturelle dans l'Inde", in *Revue thomiste*, 51 (1951) 134-149, quote, p. 138. *Yoga Sutra*, IV, 34: "Isolation is the inverse generation of the aspects, no longer provided with a purpose by the Self, or it is in the Energy of Intellect grounded in itself" (aspects = *Gunas*), *Yoga systems of Patanjali*, by James Haughton Woods, Harvard's Oriental Series, vol. 17, 1914, 374.
31. Cf. BM, 816.
32. Cf. ESH, 62; St Augustine, *De Trinitate*, X, 12; XIV, 10; IX, 3; In Johan, *Evang., Tractatus XVIII*, V, 10. Cf. also Zaehner, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane*, 1967.
33. ESH, 62. Here what Lacombe means is that these experiences are of the same 'level', same 'depth' in man, though not of the same type; for the experience of the 'spirituality', of the inmost reality of the self and through it of the absolute (as we shall see presently), is not of the same nature as a poetic experience caused by any created object 'outside' or 'inside' me. In "L'Expérience Mystique", in *Semaine de Synthèse*, 1963, 359-360.
34. Cf. ESH, 64-65, also *Gandhi, ou la force de l'âme*, 42-43.
35. Cf. MN, 141f. see further for this section, BM, 818ff; EH, 129.
36. St Thomas, *Summa Theologiae*, I, 60, 5 (Translation by Kenelm Foster, O.P., *St Thomas Aquinas*, vol. 9, Ia 50-64, London, 1968, 201).
37. St Thomas, *ibid.* This doctrine is commonly accepted by Thomists, and it is not necessary for our purpose to develop it further. Cf. J. de Finance, *Etre et Agir*, Paris. 1945, 161f.
38. Cf. "Expérience du Yoga et Christianisme, 112-117; CPC, 39-40.
39. MN, 148. See further, "Prière" 143-4. "Moralité, concentration, sagesse" in *Studia Missionalia*, XIII (1963), 9-17; "Expérience du Yoga", 122-3.

40. BM, 792, note 1. See further, "Ramanoudja" in *Approches de l'Inde*, 117-123; M. Dhavamony, "The Mystery of God according to the Bhakti mystics of modern Hinduism", in *Studia Missionalia*, XVII (1968), 147-167; *Love of God According to Saiva Siddhanta*, Oxford, 1971, esp. Parts I & II. This paragraph is based primarily on *Le Brahmanisme*, 729f; 790ff.
41. BM, 797.
42. "L'Idéal et les moyens de perfection dans l'hindouisme," in *Axes*, VI-VII, June-July (1969), 87-93, quote from 92.
43. Cf. ESH, 65.
44. Cf. "L'Idéal", 90; Lacombe in "Incidence de la rencontre des religions sur la théologie", *Revue thomiste*, LXXI (1971) nos. 2-3, 589-598 shows yet more clearly the importance of bhakti in a hindu-christian encounter.
45. Cf. ESH, 67, "Hindouisme et liberté" in *Recherches et débats*, 1952, 40.
46. See for this paragraph "Expérience Mystique...", 352; CPC, 36f; "Sur le Yoga ...", 163; MN, 134f.
47. Cf. BM, 821; "Expérience Mystique...", 357-8.
48. CPC, 37; Cf. Expérience, 358.
49. The expression is of Maritain, *Quatre essais sur l'esprit dans sa condition charnelle*, Desclée, 1939, 132: "Une expérience fruitive de l'absolu". Maritain purposely uses 'a' for the absolute instead of 'A', because he wants to show that not all mystic experience is necessarily of God. The thesis is common to L. Gardet, (*Expérience mystique en terres non-chrétiennes*, Alsatia, Paris, 1953), Journet, Gardeil and Lacombe, all Thomists.
50. D. Ruysbroeck, *Opera Omnia*, First Published, Cologne, 1552, Reprint, Gregg Press, London, 1967, 394.
51. H. de Lubac, "Préface" to *La Mystique et les mystiques*, 17.
52. Gregorian Press, Rome, 1970, 104ff.
53. The problem of the various types of mystical experiences and the reasons for their differences are studied thoroughly by R.C. Zaehner, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane* and *At Sundry Times*. A brief discussion can be found in M. Dhavamony, *Love of God according to Saiva Siddhanta*, Oxford, 1971, 351ff.
54. Cf. L. Gardet, *Expérience mystique*, 16, 19.
55. Cf. Maritain, *Quatre essais*, 134f, 147f, 155, 157.
56. Cf. M. Dhavamony, *Love of God*, 367: "the realization of oneness with, or in, or of something which transcends the empirical self".
57. Maritain, *Quatre essais*, 154; see 155.
58. Maritain, *Quatre essais*, 166f; Gardet, *Expérience mystique*, 90f; Ch. Bernard, *Contemplazione, azione, mistica*, Rome, 1971, 92ff. These authors do not seem to distinguish between a profane natural mysticism and a sacred natural mysticism as does Prof. Zaehner. Maritain however speaks of a "vast pre-mystic zone" (*Quatre essais*, 146) which is similar to the experiences described by Zaehner as profane natural mysticism.

59. de Lubac, *Préface*, 26. He refers to explicit Christic, theological faith.
60. Cf. *EH*, 129.
61. Here we are speaking of the experience which goes beyond the so called 'natural mysticism' of immanence which stops with the experience of the act of existence, where the self is experienced. As we shall see in a moment, the question of 'pure natural mystical experience of immanence' is only a theory of the Thomists. Prof. Lacombe certainly does not stop with that.
62. Cf. Fr. Vandenbroucke, "Actualité de maître Eckhart?" in *La Vie Spirituelle*, 124 (1971) no. 578, 7-19, esp. 8.
63. Eckhart, *Deutsche Werke*, I, Kohlhammer Verlag, 1958, 113. See F. Pfeiffer, *Meister Eckhart*, 4 ed. Gottingen, 1924, 319.
64. Cf. C. Yannaras, *La théologie de l'absence et de l'inconnaisance de Dieu*, Cerf, 1971, 105f.
65. *Existence de l'homme*, 131. See *CPC*, 34, note 4.
66. St Teresa, *op. cit.*, vol. II, 240ff. Cf. K. Klostermaier, "Hindu-Christian Dialogue", in *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, V (1968) 1, 21-45. "Later I had the experience of real 'dialogue in depth'—we hardly ever talked about God. Strangely enough many of my friends with whom I had these true dialogues agreed with me that often when we were sitting together in silence much more 'happened' than when we were talking", 44.

CHAPTER III

THE INCARNATE WORD, EXEMPLAR OF RELIGIOUS ENCOUNTER (DR J.A. CUTTAT)

While characterising his approach to Hinduism as "adoption through transcendence",¹ Dr Jacques-Albert Cuttat remarks that perfect adoption has been achieved only by Christ and by the Saints in as much as they were conformed to Him, that it is an ideal lying beyond all techniques and methods. If Prof. Lacombe considered the meeting with Hinduism possible only at a level beneath all its doctrinal expressions, Dr Cuttat is convinced that a meeting should take place on the "summit" of spiritual development, on the level of the Yogi and the Saint, the archetypes of Oriental and Biblical spiritualities. It is however, not on the level of doctrines that Cuttat proposes to encounter Hinduism, but on that of the spiritual experience—at its highest level.² This, according to him, is not only possible but also necessary if there is to be any encounter.

One-time Consultor to the Secretariate for Non-Christians and a Swiss diplomat educated at the universities of Berne and Paris, Dr Cuttat was born at Delémont, Switzerland in 1909. His diplomatic career took him to India, the Argentine, Colombia, Ecuador and Greece. He taught Comparative Religion and Philosophy at the University of Bogota, at Columbia University, at the *École Pratique des Hautes Études* (Sorbonne) and has given several series of lectures in Germany and Switzerland. For over thirty years he has devoted himself to the study of Oriental Spirituality in its relationship with Christian Revelation.

His deep love for and indebtedness to India may be gathered from his own words. After a week's stay at Kurisumala Ashram, in november 1960, he wrote in the guest book:

The undersigned who owes to Indian spirituality and to Hesychasm, the prayer of the heart, the re-kindling of his Catholic Faith, leaves Kurisumala with immense gratitude, though with a pang of the heart as he is leaving behind a new spiritual home. What I have found here goes beyond all that I had hoped for at Kurisumala: the mystical depth

of India culminating in the 'Totus Deus, Totus Homo', by means of the liturgy of the Eastern Church and the pure monastic contemplation of the Fathers. For the first time in my life I have lived concretely the presence of Jesus in the hearts of these Indian monks who have found fathers, true 'gurus', who form them by love in the image of God made man. To me, an immense future seems to be promised to the wonderful synthesis realised in seed—but very really, on this Mountain of the Cross...³

During his stay in India as Swiss ambassador he initiated a series of meetings of a group of christians of various denominations who were interested in finding points of religious contact. His aim was "inner dialogue", an attempt to experience in depth the meeting of hindu and christian spiritualities. His major work, *Expérience chrétienne et spiritualité orientale* originated in these meetings.⁴ It is said of this book that it is a "charter for inter-religious dialogue, and is thus indispensable reading for anyone contemplating a spiritual encounter with the Asiatic East".⁵ Since the erection of the Secretariate for non-christian religions, writes Father Dhavamony, it is "by far the most important contribution made towards a better understanding of the great Asiatic religions".⁶ It is by no means an easy book: Fr Rossano confesses that even after reading it about three times, there "are some points which remain obscure and vague". The style is very personal and intuitive, elliptical and abstruse. Another of Cuttat's important works is *The Encounter of Religions with an Essay on the Prayer of Jesus*,⁷ whose "rare virtue of intellectual charity" is praised by Dr Dietrich von Hildebrand in his preface to it. For other important works we refer the reader to the Bibliography.

We propose to present the extremely condensed thought of Dr Cuttat in the following manner. In the context of East-West encounter we shall discuss his understanding of dialogue, with special reference to *Epoché*. The major principle of his approach to Hinduism is "contrast and convergence" on the pattern of the Hypostatic Union. We shall highlight the contrast between hindu and christian spiritualities and show how the "reciprocal interiority" of christian spirituality alone can assume the "solitary interiority" of the hindu. Then we shall present three examples to exemplify this principle of 'assumption': the concept of God, of creation and of Incarnation. We shall

refer also to the example of St Augustine and Hesychasm how this 'assumption' has in fact been achieved. Finally a note on Cuttat's neglect of bhakti before we conclude with a theological discussion of the principle of the Incarnation as model of Dialogue.

I. EAST-WEST ENCOUNTER

The problem of the meeting of Eastern and Western spiritualities has become very pressing. The world is 'shrinking in size' through ever faster means of communication and interrelatedness. The East has entered European thought as an "invisible interlocutor", and the West that of the East. We are at the beginning of an Asio-European planetary renaissance.⁸ The East has become a vital force in Western thought, even creating the danger that sceptics and 'weaklings' who are dissatisfied with christian spirituality may look to Yoga and other asiatic spiritualities and succumb to them. However this danger is not without a "redeeming element". In fact it is not an occasion for either party to forsake its values but a call to deepen them more consciously. In various ways this interpenetration forces a basic decision which is constitutive of a "transcendent person". It is time that East and West encountered each other as two spiritual persons, as mysteries, not as problems.

1) *Historical Survey*

The history of the encounter between East and West according to Cuttat "dates back to the early history of Christianity, to the patristic period",⁹ for it was the spiritual face of Asia with its contemplative power, its sense of the sacredness of nature that confronted the judeo-christian monotheism under the guise of the Gnosis of Alexandria and neo-Platonism.¹⁰ The Fathers of the Church, by their vision of the world as culminating in Christ were enabled to perceive and integrate into this Christocentric vision, values which they found in non-christian spiritualities. The special case of St Augustine is often referred to by Cuttat as an example of a magnificent synthesis of the values of the East and the West.

After the early centuries, the East remained unrecognized and hidden in the life of the West, though present in the Manichean and Rhenish mystical movements, and later in the idealist

philosophies of Fichte, Schelling and Hegel.¹¹ Asia's presence was again noticed only at the end of the eighteenth century when Europeans began to study Oriental languages and cultures. The discovery of the "spiritual Asia" created various reactions in Europe. Cuttat considers three major trends: the Exclusivist, the Pragmatic and the Syncretist attitudes, which we have referred to earlier in the Introduction. He considers these attitudes incompatible with "intellectual charity", which in the context of the encounter of religions means approaching the eastern religious traditions with respect and seeking to understand them from within. Only by the elimination of the pragmatist, exclusivist and syncretist attitudes can there be what Cuttat calls a "dialogical" attitude, which we shall now consider more in detail.¹²

2) *Requirements of a Dialogue*

A dialogue implies two irreducibly different subjects with something in common. The greater the difference and contrast between the two, the more able they are to meet at a deeper or higher plane and this meeting is more "genuinely uniting"¹³ provided differences are not arbitrarily denied, eluded or effaced, but more and more clearly discerned and "confronted". The higher one rises in the order of spiritual values, the truer it is that uniformity separates and distinction unites.

The first condition for any true dialogue is to know how to be silent so as to listen to the other, to make the effort to "allow the other to speak", so as to understand the interlocutor in his otherness, to understand what he says *as he understands it*. This attitude of silencing oneself is useful and necessary not only before a person, but even before a book or an event if we wish to understand it from within, in its otherness. It is for this requirement that Cuttat advocates "phenomenological suspension" or *Epoché*.¹⁴

3) *Epoché and Eidetic Vision*

Husserl brought out the shortcomings of Psychologism by showing that the structure of consciousness is essentially trans-psychological; that is, it is always confronted by an intelligible given fact, an essence, which is 'there', which consciousness only recognises or explains, but does not invent. But to bring to light the intelligible data present in it, consciousness must be purified

of all prejudices, subjective judgements and "vague evidences", for they mask from us the essence of a given fact. This intellectual asceticism is called *epoché*, suspension of judgement, the "placing in brackets" of all prejudices in the widest possible sense. We put in parenthesis all the accidental modalities of our religion, its historical, cultural, social and psychological concomitants, in a word, everything that prevents us from listening to the other, in as much as he is other. I not only withhold my judgement as long as the other speaks to me, but I "suspend... the explicit adherence to my faith with a view to interiorly reproducing in me the spiritual, central act of my partner..."¹⁵ This silencing of my religious convictions does not mean that I deny them; the *epoché* abstains only provisionally from allowing them to prejudice my discoveries and conclusions. Such a "placing in parenthesis" allows the thing to speak, to reveal its essence—*eidós*. However this inter-religious phenomenological *epoché* is only a first step which calls for a second, that of dropping the parenthesis when the essence of the thing in itself has been discovered, has been manifested to me. As soon as I realise that it is time for me to give my answer, I must "reopen the parenthesis", for if I fail to reopen it, I shall be conducting only a monologue: my opinion would not only be reduced, but over-reduced, suppressed. This placing in parenthesis of my religious convictions does not weaken them; on the contrary, they emerge strengthened, enriched by new dimensions. This procedure is altogether different from syncretism which fails to reopen the parenthesis, and also from apologetic strategies for it confronts other religions with the Christ event in order to "render the Church co-extensive with all non-christian spiritual élan without preoccupation of conversion"¹⁶

The religious *epoché*, then, wards off the dangers referred to earlier: fanatic exclusivism which refuses to listen to the other, and syncretism, which by failing to reopen the parenthesis also refuses to listen to the other as really other. Cuttat gives various examples to show the danger into which we fall if we do not follow this rule: the mixing up of the Indian idea of emanation with Creation, Avatar with Incarnation, bhakti with Agape and the like. Both exclusivism and syncretism reduce dialogue to monologue.

Concerning the possibility and value of such *epoché* Cuttat says that of all things religion is the last that can be approached from the outside, for the "awareness of the sacred", of a reality

transcending both human consciousness and the cosmos, is supra-rational, unobjectifiable and therefore accessible only from within—from one's own experience of it. We can agree with him that it is necessary to "place in parenthesis" all the accidental modalities of our religion and all prejudices so that we can reach the 'eidos' with the required accuracy.¹⁷ Cuttat by insisting on "re-opening" the parenthesis before one speaks, escapes the criticism of J. Wach who says that the elimination of all value judgement in favour of a completely 'objective' approach to religion leads to relativism,¹⁸ yet we would do well to emphasise along with Lacombe that it is precisely the religious convictions of the dialogue partners that enable them to hold a real inter-religious dialogue. Speaking of the experience of an inter-religious dialogue, Lacombe affirms that:

these competent men were first of all believers, and this trait has marked the originality of our Colloquium, very different from, for example, a Congress of the History of Religions, in which the personal belief or the unbelief of the scholar is deliberately placed within parenthesis. It is the very vigour of our respective religious convictions which has permitted us to live together for a whole week on a level of true spiritual friendship....¹⁹

However, at least the idea of suspending prejudices and the like can be very helpful as a preliminary preparation for dialogue, in order to obtain an 'objective' knowledge of the religion of the other. But when we come to the dialogue table, there is no more the possibility of a suspension of my explicit adherence to my faith, unless I want to have no more than a doctrinal discussion, or just an "a-religious game" devoid of any inter-religious value, for a genuine inter-religious dialogue has to be a personal encounter with an entire human being.

4) *The Golden Rule*

Given this reservation we can proceed with the method of Cuttat. His whole approach to other religions can be expressed in the Golden Rule:

The better we understand our faith, the better we will understand that of others from within; and, inversely, the more we understand an alien religion *ab intra*, the more we are likely to deepen our understanding of our faith.²⁰

This Golden Rule itself and the whole of Cuttat's approach to Hinduism can be understood only in the context of his basic dictum: distinguish without separating, in order to unite without mingling (the Formula of Chalcedon). The connection between the phenomenology of inter-religious dialogue and the mystery of the Hypostatic Union is a very close one and will be discussed at length in a subsequent section. Since the Golden Rule demands that we delve deep into our own religion, an encounter with eastern spirituality will be a providential occasion for each religious partner to gain a deeper understanding of his own religion. Hence the approach of Cuttat to Hinduism can be considered from the aspect of mutual enrichment. Since the eastern and western spiritualities are both authentic,²¹ as we shall see presently, we cannot reduce them to a third; but their mere apposition would contradict the transcendent unity of God as well as the unity of human nature. Accordingly the two spiritual dimensions must be considered as complementary, one subordinate to the other.²² Now if their relation is not one of simple juxtaposition, but one of hierarchical subordination, the question follows which of the two is capable of including the other without mutilating its positive values. In other words, which of the spiritualities is comprehensive enough to assume the other and perfect it?

II. CONTRAST AND CONVERGENCE

As "awareness of contrast is the primary condition for all authentic dialogue", we shall point out the differences which seem to separate irreducibly the Oriental and Biblical spiritualities and put their contrast in relief. The contrast becomes clear when we examine the archetypes of the two 'hemispheres', the Saint and the Yogi. We shall also treat of the "assumptive powers" of each of the spiritualities; but before we proceed with this contrasting, something should be said about why Cuttat considers the encounter possible only on the level of the spiritualities.

1) *Encounter of spiritualities*

Spirituality is a basic human phenomenon.²³ It is a discipline which leads one's whole being to its ultimate depths and to a growing perception of man's fundamental values. It trans-

forms man from within and is today, more than ever, decisive in world events. It may be defined as the "controllable and methodic spiritual ways and attitudes of the whole man which aim at union with the Supreme Reality".²⁴ Cuttat affirms that every person, be he an agnostic or atheist, remains profoundly marked and characterised by his religious tradition, even if he may call it superstition. And if an encounter of religions is to remain 'religious' it cannot be approached from the outside but only from within, and so it necessarily presupposes at least a minimum of spiritual life in the dialogue partners. Making Eliade's opinion his own, Cuttat argues that: "sooner or later, our dialogue with the 'others'...will take place not in the actual empirical and utilitarian language, but in a language capable of expressing human realities and spiritual values".²⁵

2) Interiority—solitary and reciprocal

Following the principle of contrasting convergence, we shall begin with one of the most basic contrasts and show that only the 'open interiority', which Cuttat usually calls "mutual interiority" of christian spirituality can assume the other without destroying it. Finally we shall attempt some illustrations of this principle.

a) Solitary interiority

In comparing the two spiritualities we shall bypass the interesting and important early stages of yoga and of christian virtues and concentrate only on the 'summits', the last stages of yoga and of christian perfection. The last three stages of yoga constitute the state of reintegration of the self; they are *dhāraṇā* (concentration), *dhyāna* (meditation) and *samādhi* (contemplation). In *samādhi* the distinction between the subject and object is totally surmounted and there is pure objectless consciousness and integration of the self.²⁶ It is what Lacombe calls the "*enstasis* of the act of knowing in the act of existing". Cuttat calls this state of *samādhi kaivalya*, the "being for self", isolation. "The Self of the yogi is the universe radically interiorised".²⁷ Basing himself on *Yoga Sutra* 1.41,²⁸ Cuttat interprets the *kaivalya* state as implying theoretical monism and practical dualism.

A few critical observations are in place here. Commenting on the description given by Cuttat, Prof. Dhavamony observes that "Cuttat's phenomenological exposition of Yoga is in general

correct and praiseworthy. But his interpretation of the ultimate stages is far from clear and accurate".²⁹ Cuttat falsely identifies *samādhi*, *nirvāna* and the Zen *satori*. The great Yoga scholar Mircea Eliade says that *samādhi* which is the final result and crown of all the ascetic's efforts and exercises defies description. "*Samādhi* is the state of contemplation in which thought grasps the forms of the object directly...the object is revealed 'in itself', in its essentials....There is real coincidence between knowledge and the object of knowledge".³⁰ He seems therefore to indicate cognitional identity rather than ontological identity. The same interpretation is given by Prof. Dhavamony in the article referred to above and by Prof. Lacombe. As to the cosmic character of the *kaivalya*, E. Wood says that: "In some western writings this state of freedom or independence has been called 'cosmic consciousness'. If this is to fit the yogic conception we must not use the word cosmic as meaning all-inclusive, but only...the direct perception and experience of the divine consciousness which is free from the troubles already mentioned".³¹ The interpretation given by Cuttat may be applicable to the explanation given by Sankara which ultimately reduces the world of experience to the sphere of unreality.

Cuttat holds that the experience of the interiority in *samādhi* is an authentic experience and is of positive value in as much as the Yogi reaches a depth of which the ordinary christian has no idea at all. He awakens the spirit to a depth which surpasses all our egocentric introversion and introspection. But this experience is essentially one of aloofness, solitariness. And in hindu spirituality there is no urge to commune with other persons in order to realise one's essential, eternal divine essence.³²

b) *Christian "reciprocal interiority"*

If in the hindu yogic experience *samādhi* is of great importance and is a criterion of spiritual growth, in Christianity the corresponding 'ecstasy' is not a criterion of christian sanctity; the criterion is rather the fruits of the Spirit, Joy, Peace, Faith, Hope and Charity and virtues like humility and obedience, the basic attitudes of the Saint: Thy will be done. The attitude of the christian Saint is disponibility: "Christian experience, mystic or otherwise, opens the soul to the fact that the omnipresent, All-Other wishes me to be *here* or *there*, *such* or *such* other,...".³³ Leaving aside these important contrasting points we

should like to fix our attention only on one important contrast: the place of the Other and of others in a christian's striving for sanctity. In opposition to the solitary interiority of the Yogi, the christian Saint is characterised by an essential relation to the Other and the others. He remains ever 'confronted' with the Absolute in Person. Instead of closing in on himself, beginning with the self, he opens himself to God and others. Since he is an image of the intra-trinitarian inter-subjectivity and relation, he is a person in proportion to his relation to other persons, and the realisation of his real self is possible only in and through others. Recognizing others as persons is constitutive of a christian's personality and spirituality. Hence the more he grows in spirituality, the more he remains in a state of 'communion', of reciprocal interiority. A genuine and deep inter-personal affectivity on the human plane is not only not an obstacle to a true "spiritual life" but it is the substratum (*materia spiritualis*, to use an Augustinian expression) for our transformation into Christ.

The christian interiority, then, is different from the solitary interiority of the Yogi, for it is open to the "super-interiority" of the Divine Thou and the human thou.³⁴ Given such a difference, we ask which of these two spiritualities is capable of assuming the other without destroying it. First let us see whether solitary interiority is capable of assuming reciprocal interiority.

It is obvious from the history of religions that a hindu is unable to practise the *epoché* we have demanded as preparation for dialogue. It looks as if he is not ready for such a risk and naturally tends to syncretism, to understand everything in his own way, instead of understanding the other in his otherness. Being afraid to "reopen the parenthesis", he tries to 'annex' the christian faith and truths to his own without caring for their otherness. For the very structure of hindu spirituality as we have seen does not permit a dialogue, consisting, as it does, of solitary interiority and excluding reciprocal interiority and communion. This inability to understand the other in his otherness is obvious from the fact that, though there is a wide variety of writings by hindu scholars on Christ and His religion,³⁵ there is hardly any exposition of christian doctrine made by a hindu which a christian can recognise as his religion. We can, however, say that there are expositions of Hinduism by christian Orientalists which can be called 'objective'. We might indeed say many of the christian presentations of Hinduism are as ob-

jective as can be expected from the followers of another religion; the same cannot be said of hindu writings on Christianity.

3) *Reciprocal interiority can assume the other*

Hence it seems that only faith in Christ has sufficient self-assurance to practise *epoché* and to "reopen the parenthesis". This in itself is an argument in favour of the special universality of Christianity considered as a spiritual and metaphysical horizon, and in favour of her assumptive power. Cuttat observes that this recognition of the truth of Christianity's universality and assumptive power is not an occasion for triumphalism but rather for increased "spiritual tact" in our dealing with others.

The very nature of christian spirituality which tries not to abolish or eliminate but to deepen the 'distance' between God and man—a distance across which man encounters God who reveals himself to him—shows that it can assume the oriental spirituality. For there is no other metaphysical locus where man can confront God. If this absolute distance between God and man has been bridged effectively by grace, the inclusion of the non-christian spiritualities is not only possible but already a fact, because in the God-Man this absolute distance between God and man has been effectively bridged and thus He becomes the locus for the encounter between God and man.³⁶

Hindu spirituality has not succeeded in making a synthesis between interiority and transcendence³⁷ and it cannot assume the biblical spirituality of reciprocity because as solitary interiority it excludes the latter; whereas the latter by definition includes and transcends the former, and thus is capable of assuming hindu spirituality provided the christian can situate himself before Christ at a depth equal to that of the solitary interiority of the East and there open the latter to the divine absolute Thou, at the very point when it tends to close itself on itself.³⁸

"Interiority is ordered to transcendency"³⁹ in the sense that interiorisation prepares the meeting with Grace, but does not produce it. In christian spirituality there is not only an inner ascent toward God, but also a descent of God toward man, a divine initiative, better received in the Godlike centre of consciousness than at the surface, but ever received, not spontaneously produced. Christian spirituality does not overlook the *ecstasy* or the solitary interiority but converts this into an "outward movement toward the Other", into a love which "surpasses

all knowledge". At the "centre of the heart", where the Oriental stops, there begins for the christian a movement, "an open movement of charity towards the depths of God". For the more consciousness grows deep and 'centred', that is, detached from the ego, the more it is permeable to the presence of the transcendent divinity.

This truth becomes clear only when we consider Christ in whom the complete union of transcendence and interiority has been achieved. The transcendence of God which is inaccessible to man on his own, does not exclude the immanence or the presence of God to man; on the contrary, this absolute transcendence is the condition for this immanence at its maximum: the intimate presence of the unfathomable divine depths to the ultimate depths of the soul and of the soul to God, mutual immanence and transcendence fully and perfectly realised only in the unity of the Father and the Son. In this the Son, because he is totally man and totally God, makes us participate in the Spirit.⁴⁰ Before the Incarnation interiority and transcendency appeared to be irreconcilably separated but in Christ this unbridgeable distance has been bridged. That which was impossible for man, has become possible through the descent of the Divine Will towards man. The Incarnation fulfils and transcends the deepest non-christian values and intuitions, hence also the solitary interiority. The absolute Personal God of the Bible has made man to His image so as to enter into a reciprocal relation with His creature: hence it is not enough for man to "be in his depth" in order to reach the Divine, he must also be "before God", *in conspectu Dei*, in order to reach his ultimate depth.⁴¹ Then only can God lead man back to himself showing him his personal centre, where interiority is inseparably linked to transcendence. Thus Christ, the "meeting point between God and man" receives and transfigures every impulse of man towards God. We may sum up by quoting a noble challenge which Cuttat addresses to the christian: "it is only an unselfish, ardent love which will be able to open the self of the eastern brother to the divine Thou. We must renounce fully for a while our cultural values so as to be able to indicate interiorly to the eastern image of God the gesture by which he is lifted up from his pre-christian depth to the Father in the Spirit, through the Son".⁴²

In connection with this other-centred interiority we may ask whether hindu bhakti does not bear some similarity to agape? Cuttat considers bhakti as a love fusion,⁴³ and so in sharp con-

trast with christian agape, which instead of abolishing the creature-creator polarity, tries to deepen it. But is there no convergence and how does bhakti culminate in agape? He who really loves God more than himself and his neighbour as himself, "regards the other as the self", and ultimately regards the self as the other.⁴⁴ That which bhakti experiences as fusion or ontological coincidence, in Cuttat's interpretation, is explained by christian spirituality as nothing more than an "intentional 'decentration' and an affective and voluntary 'coincidence' with the Other". The hindu brother may be helped to understand that the Pauline statement: "it is no more I who live but Christ lives in me" is not an absorption of a person by Christ; but He is 'in' me, 'more interior to me than my innermost self'; the 'forgetfulness of the self', the 'loss of the self', the total abandonment of the self remains a personal, free act and a free subject remains the author of this act. For agape does not absorb the human person but transforms him and 'deifies' him fully: it is because Christ transforms him into Himself that He raises him and transfigures him in glory.

The charity of Christ can and must insert itself at the precise point and moment when bhakti turns its élan towards the other and absorbs him, for it is precisely that élan that must be welcomed and "converted". Christian agape by always remaining within the 'clausura Christi', includes every neighbour and the whole sphere of social relationships, carrying them all into the sphere of the divine inter-subjectivity—to the 'abyss of the Father', open to the Son and the Spirit. Thus human inter-subjectivity becomes within the Church an *imago trinitatis*. Hence Cuttat concludes that only the reciprocal interiority of christian spirituality, which receives and extends to all men the intra-trinitarian communion, can assume and transform the solitary interiority of the hindu.⁴⁵

III. THE CHRISTIAN 'ASSUMPTION'

We have seen in general the capability of christian spirituality to assume the solitary interiority of non-christian spiritualities. Now it remains for us to see a few concrete examples where this assumptive power is exercised and the hindu experience is 'assumed' and transformed. We shall examine merely the concept of the Deity, the doctrine of creation-emanation and

the belief in the Incarnation-Avatar, from among the many instances which Cuttat proposes as examples of adoption through transcendence.

1. *The Concept of the Deity*

According to the spiritual East only an unconditioned, unlimited and infinite indetermination is worthy of being called Absolute, the latter being considered as supra-personal, without a name, form or quality.⁴⁶ The God of the Bible, for example, would be seen as a relative and anthropomorphic mode of the Supreme Being. The most basic reason for denying personal perfection to the Absolute is that all determination is a negation. To affirm that the Absolute is without qualities because *we* cannot qualify Him properly is already to qualify Him in a human way. Christianity on the other hand believes in a God who reveals himself as personal, in fact as tri-personal. Granting that God cannot be reached merely by conceptual assent, the christian theologian points out that in the concept itself there is more than a conceptual or representative element, namely a dynamic affirmation of being, pointing to the Absolute.

The gap between these two views is not unbridgeable. When the christian instead of turning away from 'impersonalism' "reproduces in himself the oriental perspective as far as he can", he sees that there are two christian categories capable of admitting the hindu Absolute into the orbit of the personal God, namely, the negative theology and the "presence of imminence". Dialogue with the East forces the christian to keep them together. Christian theology uses the affirmative way, the negative way and the way of eminence as valid means of man's ascent to God. We know that God is not a person as we are! He is far beyond any conceivable human qualification. The idea of the Absolute forces me to keep clear of all anthropomorphisms, and the idea of a Person who reveals himself in the Word Incarnate shows me that this inaccessible God, this Absolute, is more present to me than myself. The hindu holds only the *via negationis* and fails to see that the *via eminentiae* is a prerequisite for it. For though the *manner* of our thought and speech is always human, involving composition and time, yet the *perfection* which they signify can be affirmed absolutely. Any perfection which we affirm of a creature is characterised by limitation and imperfection but it can be applied to God by removing all its imperfections and

limitations, for it is realised in Him eminently. In its intrinsic structure, the negative way of the hindu implies and leads to the transcendent and 'eminent' affirmation of God's perfections. The object of this 'eminent' affirmation is not an undifferentiated divinity, impersonal principle, empty unity, universal possibility, but God who is supreme Person. In every man his 'last secret' is his personality, so too "God is the secret Being par excellence because he is par excellence the Personal Being".⁴⁷

For a hindu philosopher personality is and remains a limitation; for a christian philosopher on the other hand it is the totality of all perfection. It must be noted however that hindu impersonalism does not mean anti-personal or strictly speaking impersonal, but 'pre-personal'. The affirmation that God is impersonal means for the western agnostic a denial of the personality of the God of the Bible. Not so for the hindu whose theology is far from being 'deifugal', a flight from God, but naturally "theocentric" and "deiform" in orientation. The hindu remains open to the "transmetacosmic"⁴⁸ person of God, and therefore open to seeing that the spiritual reality, the perfection we call person, "the intimate mystery which is open to the intimate mystery of the other and of the Other",⁴⁹ need not be split into the two relative realms of the individual-empirical self (*jīvātman*) and the universal self (*paramātman*), but as a perfection is open to all other beings. We shall see later in the chapter on Monchanin how the Trinity alone fulfils the aspirations for a God beyond name and form and a God who is near to man.

The second category capable of assuming the hindu concept is the idea of the "presence of divine immensity", the creative presence of God in the creature. Maritain holds that in the "natural hindu mystical experience" there is not only an experience of the substantial act of the soul's existence, but also a lived experience of the *via negationis* (not merely conceptual), a negative mystical experience of the Divine Absolute in the soul.⁵⁰ It is negative because it is not an experience of the Absolute in itself, but only in its effect. Since the experience of the act of existence, free of all limitations, is liable to be thought of as an experience of the Absolute, Cuttat says that the soul in which the experience of the 'presence of immensity' takes place is not God but only the privileged metaphysical *locus* of the creative presence of the Creator. We can point out to the hindu that only a person is capable of unlimited presence to the other and that

this presence is more immeasurable and unlimited than the solitary presence of the self to itself, and that a person is the more immanent the more he is present to the other as other. Hence the total presence of a Person who is God to another Person who is God would be infinite. The triune God "alone is capable of satisfying the ultimate aspirations of all the creatures made to His image, by assuming them, because only a Supreme Someone in three persons is infinitely transpersonal, that is, absolute ("relative to none") and relative to all and everything, capable of creating from nothing and of communicating Himself to Himself and to his work".⁵¹ Briefly then, we may say that the impersonal Absolute of the vedantin is assumed in the transpersonal, intra-trinitarian life by way of negation and the "presence of immensity", for the impersonal Absolute is already present in the affirmation of the Triune God.

2. *Creation and emanation*

We shall only allude to this pair of converging contrast. According to hindu cosmogonies, 'creation' is a centrifugal, 'deifugal' movement towards nothing, an ontologic degradation of the original fulness, whether it be called emanation or manifestation of the Ultimate Reality.⁵² It is deifugal in its descent towards a fatal dissolution (*pralaya*) and cyclical restitution. In Christianity, on the other hand, God is not the "unmanifested side of the universe" but a Personal Absolute and hence the world process is not a necessary unfolding of the Divine possibilities, but a creation, a free and conscious act of the Personal Absolute positing before Himself autonomous creatures with a vocation to progress towards Him. In other words, it is an ascent from the absence of being through all grades of pre-personal beings to increasingly personal values and finally through man to God.

The biblical notion of creation *seems* to contradict and exclude the Oriental cosmogonies because the latter imply a "constitutuality between God and the world", but *in fact* the idea of creation welcomes and reorientates what is most profound in these cosmogonies, the idea that the universe manifests and unfolds something of the divine. "The heavens declare the Glory of God" (Ps. 19:1). But contrary to the cosmogonies, in creation it is not the divine substance itself that is manifested but God's will, His glory, His providential omnipotence,

because He is not the 'material cause' of the world, nor is creation an evolution of the divine substance; yet, in as far as the divine will is the divine substance considered dynamically, creation does manifest God's substance. And this universe is a symbol of God in the measure in which it culminates in man, who is a personal image, an autonomous and subsistent image of a Personal Absolute. The *Canticle of the three Young Men* (Daniel, 3.52ff) and the "*Canticle of Creatures*" of St Francis are excellent expressions of the 'assumption' of the Oriental idea by the Bible and the christian.⁵³ The encounter with Hinduism recalls to the christian the sense of the sacred, of symbolism, of cosmic and metacosmic transparence; God invites us to rediscover the aspect of "cosmic liturgy" in the Orient. This is a precious gift, provided we remember that it is the God of the Bible who invites us and that it is to the God of Abraham, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all creation should become 'permeable'. "When the Orient reminds us that the universe is a symbol of God, Christianity repeats to us that this symbol is also and above all a *message* of God".⁵⁴ This message is a symbol which reveals its model, infinitely more real, and its Author who alone subsists by himself. The cosmic function of the Word, brought to light again by Teilhard is enhanced by the Orient. Cuttat discusses the ideas of Teilhard and the cosmic function of the Word, but we shall not enter into them, since they are outside our scope.

3) *The Incarnation and Avatar*

It goes without saying that since the Incarnation is central for the christian and Avatar for the bhakti trend of Hinduism, their converging-contrast value cannot be exaggerated. Briefly the position of Cuttat comes to this: the Oriental "descents" or manifestations of God are not "Incarnations"; they are essentially different from the Incarnation, not merely in degree but in nature. Krishna, for example, is considered as possessing a human form; his historicity, however, though not denied is unimportant. What is important is that the avatar is essentially an "efficacious symbolic myth".⁵⁵ It is a sacred support which represents and evokes that which cannot be directly expressed; the unique reality of our divine Self of which the I, the You, the World and Krishna himself are only transitory reflexions, providential 'mirrors'. It would even be blasphemous for a hindu

to say that Krishna could suffer, as Radhakrishnan has said in a very pointed way.⁵⁶ Briefly, then, according to Cuttat, the hindu avatar is a type of docetism which is "even an article of faith".

The christian Incarnation on the other hand is primarily a fact, besides being a symbol, a "support for contemplation". Christ, fully God and fully man in the one indivisible Person, is the "supreme transparence" of the finite to the Infinite, of the relative to the Absolute. He is also the total symbol, the synthesis and the locus of all theophanies, the "face of God". He is the unique divine Symbol, the archetype and accomplishment of all that the Orient waits for. As the East has discovered in Krishna the 'sacred mirror' of the pre-conscious depths of the Self, the dialogue with it is a providential occasion for us christians to revive the patristic and medieval habit of contemplating Christ as a sacrosanct Mirror which awakens us to unsuspected depths of the soul, depths which would remain hidden were it not for this. "look at Christ".⁵⁷ Christ interiorises all the efforts of the East and shows us that the Kingdom of God is within us and at the same time transcends us, because He is a symbol and infinitely more than a symbol. He escapes being ontologically fused with the Bhakta or the *Jñānic* contemplative: He remains in front of us and is transcendent. And it is thus that He elevates the Oriental interiority and assumes it: He awakens the ultimate depths of the soul only to snatch it away from isolation into the intra-divine, intra-trinitarian inter-subjectivity. He penetrates the Self only to carry it away with Him into the Divine life where the infinite interiority of the Spirit unceasingly blossoms forth into the Son, and through Him opens itself to the absolute transcendence of the "abyss of the Father". In other words, the Holy Spirit communicates to men the interiority of God, assumes the human interiority in God; it is in the Spirit that, from the "abyss of the heart", the Son raises us to the "abyss of the Father".⁵⁸

Cuttat's view that in the last analysis the avatar is a type of docetism calls for comment. It must be said that from the point of view of the Advaitins there would be no difficulty in such a view, for as Swami Swarupananda says commenting on verse IV,6 of the Gita: "He does not come into being as others do, bound by *karma*, under the thralldom of *Prakṛti* (Nature). He is not tied by the fetters of the *Guṇas*—because He is the Lord of Maya. By *my own maya* is understood: My embodiment is only apparent and does not touch My true nature".⁵⁹ Views similar to that of

Cuttat are held by most of the catholic orientalists, with some modifications. Father Johannis, for example, who appreciates very well the importance of the avatar in the spiritual life of the hindu, says: "in the avatar there is only one divine person and one divine nature, the humanity is a 'form' by which the divine person clothes himself..."⁶⁰ For, one becomes man only through *Karma*, according to one's merits or demerits, but *Karma* does not affect Vishnu and he cannot be subject to it—hence he can only vest himself in a human form. The avatar has no real human soul or human nature. Jean Filliozat after speaking of the various types of avatars says that God could even be incarnate in the son of a man and a woman like Rama or Krishna, but the end of the study he concludes: "brahmanism is docetist..."⁶¹

Prof. Lacombe however affirms that the hindu avatar may not be considered as docetist because the explicit intention of the Vaishnavites is to bring men and God as close as possible. The incarnate condition of the supreme being has neither more nor less reality than the cosmic, but the evaluation of the degree of reality varies according to the diverse philosophical systems implied in the diverse theologies of the avatars. Yet the avatar is not defined as the assumption by an uncreated person of a complete and individual human nature—body and soul. India has not developed the idea of a nature, of the essence of man. That which she believes in is a "structured human condition provided with its own dynamism".⁶²

Prof. Zaehner seems to hold that Krishna is a real man.⁶³ And Professor Dhavamony is very positive that "both from popular Hinduism and from hindu scriptures, it is clear that Krishna, the 'incarnate God' has a real human nature"⁶⁴ The human nature of Krishna is like that of a *Jivan-mukta*, and hence unaffected by *Karma*. Of the real human nature of Krishna the same author continues: "Their (scil. the Hindu theologians') whole notion of the divine and human nature of their incarnate God is totally different from that of christian doctrine".⁶⁵ For according to Hinduism there is only an accidental union between the eternal soul and the body, and the body can be of diverse types. Hence it is not exact to say that the hindu concept avatar is docetist.

4. *The examples of St Augustine and of Hesychasm*

Before we conclude, it is necessary at least to allude to the

two object lessons which Cuttat gives to show that the synthesis between East and West has been achieved and that it is still possible. The examples are the conversion of St Augustine and the Hesychast method of prayer. St. Augustine, according to Cuttat, achieved in himself a living synthesis between the Oriental interiority and christian transcendence.⁶⁶ Accustomed to the *enstasis* of the Plotinian type, he was encountered by the God of the Bible; he experienced in faith the Personal Absolute both as transcendent and as the ultimate limits of interiority, so that he could say: "Thou wast more interior to me than the innermost part of my soul and superior to the highest part thereof" (*Conf.* III.6). Cuttat concludes that in spite of the absence of the "cosmic component", so much developed in Asian spirituality, St Augustine's conversion shows that christian spirituality has in fact been deepened and enriched by it.⁶⁷

The 'cosmic component' which was absent in Augustine is clearly present in the Hesychast method of prayer.⁶⁸ This method tries to empty the intellect of all thought, image, passion and the like, and the ascent towards God begins by a return to and "re-entering into oneself", an "enstasy". But where it seems to coincide most with the Oriental interiority, it opens on to the christian dimension, on to the irreducible transcendence of the personal God. Hence Cuttat thinks that Hesychasm appears to occupy a midway position between the techniques of the East and the "spiritual exercises" or mystical methods of the Church of Rome. We can only give his final conclusion. He says that this method, situated as it is at the geographical and spiritual border-land between the two religious hemispheres, incorporates into Christ both these dimensions and hence is the first attempt to integrate into the God-made-Man all forms which man's striving towards God have taken.⁶⁹ In spite of the dangers and perils it contains it is a way which we should follow trying out all its potentialities.

In this context we might also refer to Cuttat's study of the possibility of a christian Yoga.⁷⁰ The solitary interiority, the "concentration" of the Yogic method does not direct the soul to the "transmetacosmic" Person of God, but risks being closed upon itself. In the life of a christian these techniques can have only an extrinsic value of preparation. Yet Cuttat would grant that Yoga, given extreme care at every step of the method to "neutralise" its natural tendency by an opening of the

self to the Absolute Thou, can help the entry into the "interior castles" of the soul and open up new sources of strength and life. He is more cautious than Prof. Lacombe and certainly much more than J.M. Déchanet.

5. *Neglect of Bhakti*

It only remains for us now to discuss two points arising from Cuttat's writings: his neglect of the bhakti trend and what significance for dialogue he sees in the Incarnation.

"It is unfortunate", writes Prof. Dhavamony, "that Cuttat has not seen the importance of bhakti both at its lower level of devotion to God and at its higher level of mystical union with him in perfect love..."⁷¹ Dr Cuttat considers bhakti in general as a way of fusion with God: "for bhakti aims at a final fusion with God".⁷² But this opinion is not altogether correct. In the course of its development bhakti has come to mean a specific religious attitude of love for, and trustful surrender to, a personal God, a trend that implies a theistic attitude, an attitude of personal relation. Besides, as we saw earlier, bhakti means primarily a participation in the divine nature. Prof. Sarma, for example, distinguishes many types of bhakti. He speaks of *ekānta-bhakti* as the purest type of bhakti, for there the worshipper loves God for His own sake not for His gifts.⁷³ L. Renou is of the opinion that "as an affective 'participation' of the soul in the divine, bhakti presupposes an object distinct from the subject".⁷⁴ The bhakta has no desire to merge into the consciousness of the unity but wishes to be conscious of God's presence and to savour it intensely. The reading of the bhaktas themselves gives the impression that they are aware of their sinfulness, and their distance from the Lord, but also of their hope that the Lord will overcome all this by his grace.

Even when according to the bhakti mystics the "soul is said to be one with God in advaitic relationship",⁷⁵ nothing more is meant than that God is inseparably united to the soul, and the union between them is consciously and mystically realised. When the bhaktas talk in terms of "non-distinction", their intention and their existential attitude is truly of a creature.

Cuttat considers bhakti as inferior to the *Jñānic* way and says that one looks in vain for a synthesis between knowledge and love in Hinduism.⁷⁶ At this point also his judgement is not

accurate, because hindus believe that the higher bhakti is a synthesis of the two elements. D.S. Sarma says that "There is a higher *jñāna* and a lower *jñāna*, as there is a higher bhakti and a lower bhakti. The higher *jñāna* is not different from the higher bhakti. The lower *jñāna* is the complement of the lower bhakti".⁷⁷ He says that having knowledge alone is like having only one leg. It seems to us that the reason for Cuttat's negative attitude towards the bhakti trend is his fear of syncretism, for people so easily consider Christianity as just another way of bhakti, which for many hindus, the advaitins for instance, is an interior way.⁷⁸ This is understandable, but it is regrettable that he has not taken into account the nuances that exist in this trend and the riches it contains for the "assumptive synthesis".

6. *Dialogue and the Incarnation*

We have hinted earlier that for Cuttat the model for a dialogue is the Incarnate Word, the Hypostatic Union: union without mingling, distinction without separation. The implications of this basic principle need now to be made explicit by gathering together elements present in Cuttat's writings.

Cuttat says that for the whole of its antinomic pattern of thinking the West is indebted not so much to Greece as to the doctrine of the Incarnation.⁷⁹ By antinomy he understands "an opposition, the terms of which remain incompatible in the natural order and reveal themselves as complementary only in the supernatural order".⁸⁰ The "understanding" of the antinomies, like interiority and transcendency requires that we distinguish them without separating them, so as to unite them without confusing them. Greek no less than Oriental thought oscillates between two poles characterised, on the one hand, by a "dualism" which tends towards separation, and on the other by a "monism" which tends towards fusion. This tendency can be observed in the Christological heresies before the Council of Chalcedon. Monophysites, for example, tended to unify by absorbing Christ's humanity into His divinity, and Nestorianism to separate and isolate the human nature of Christ at the expense of His divine nature. But with the great Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) which defined the unity without confusion and the distinction without separation of the two natures in the one Person of Christ, there dawns a new form of thinking in the history of human understanding which consists in "keeping to-

gether", in "maintaining the tension" rather than dissolving antithetic terms like the one and the many, being and becoming, soul and body, spirit and nature. "This antinomic form of thinking", concludes Cuttat, "was the evident consequence of the dogmatic formulation of the Hypostatic Union".⁸¹ We shall devote a few moments to bringing out more fully the meaning of the encounter of Religions on the pattern of the Hypostatic Union.

The Council of Chalcedon taught that there are two natures in Christ. The completeness of the two natures is affirmed: Christ is consubstantial with the Father according to His divinity and with us according to His humanity. One and the same Person in two natures without confusion or change (against Monophysitism), without division or separation (against Nestorianism). The distinction of the two natures is not suppressed by their union, on the contrary, the proper character of each is preserved as they exist together in the one person. We shall consider first the negative meaning of this definition for the encounter, and then its positive meaning. We shall also attempt a reflection, considering the Incarnation more "dynamically".

Inter-religious phenomenology, we have seen earlier, implies the capacity to distinguish without separating and to unite without mingling the variety of religious data of the diverse religions, that is, to take a midway stand between the two extremes of exclusivism and syncretism. The first is a predominantly western danger where distinction prevails over union. The western desire for distinguishing, divorced from a desire for unification, tended to isolate Christianity and led it to deny values in other religions. This "form of Nestorianism", of unduly separating and isolating was due to a "value-blindness with regard to the universal dimension of Christ".⁸² The Orientals, on the other hand, have the opposite tendency, resulting from their search for unity and unification, but their search is not for a true unity in which the joining poles remain distinct without being merged indistinguishably into one another, and results in syncretism, "a form of Monophysitism", mingling instead of uniting. This tendency fails to appreciate the riches of other religions as others. Hypostatic Union, therefore, which keeps the distinction in unity of the two natures of Christ, of God and of man, "is the narrow path between these two extremes".⁸³

Considering now more positively the relation between the encounter of religions, encounter of the East and the West, and

the mystery of the Incarnation, we should recall what we have said concerning the basic tendencies of the East and West, which, according to the terminology of Cuttat, are to solitary interiority and to transcendence.⁸⁴ In the East, creation is a deifugal descent toward fatal dissolution and, conversely, the eastern spiritualities are a "way back to the primordial, precosmic state in which all beings coincide again with the metacosmical, undifferentiated Reality. They imply a movement *backward* to the God-head as pretemporal source and transpersonal It".⁸⁵ In Christianity, the world exists by creation, the free and conscious act of the Personal Absolute positing before Himself autonomous creatures with a vocation to progress towards Him. In this dimension spirituality is essentially "a movement forward toward God who is the post-temporal goal and personal self-revealed Thou". If the one spirituality is interiorisation and withdrawal, the other is decentration and surrender in faith. Summarily, the "goal of the Eastern movement background is fusion in identity, inwardness in divine solitude (...); the goal of the monotheistic forward movement is union in confrontation, reciprocal interiority in divine communion".⁸⁶

If in the Oriental perspective the world is but the manifested cosmical side of the Godhead, the Godhead itself is the other non-manifested "metacosmical side of the cosmos" and hence only relatively transcendent, to be reached through radical interiorisation of our subjective and objective consciousness.⁸⁷ The monotheistic God of the Bible, on the other hand, is "transmetacosmical", that is, separated from His creation by an absolute distance which only He can cross through grace. Hence "even the deepest interiority cannot be more than the starting point of an *exodus*" into Him. But here interiority does not eliminate transcendence, and transcendence without compromising interiority deepens and perfects it. In Christ these two dimensions are best unified without mingling and thus He becomes the "place" *par excellence* of the meeting between the East and the West.

To explain this further, every human person is by definition a synthesis of interiority and transcendence—of *enstasis* and *ek-stasis*, a junction of a "within" and a "without", a "going out of himself" and a "remaining within himself".⁸⁸ Christ is the Perfect Man; in the words of Karl Rahner: "If human nature is conceived as an active transcendence towards the absolute being

of God, a transcendence that is open and must be personally realised, then the Incarnation can be regarded as the (free, gratuitous, unique) supreme fulfilment of what is meant by 'human being'.⁸⁹ Or according to Cuttat, interiority and transcendence are the two poles of an antinomy which can be resolved only in God.

...it is fitting that there be a God who is truly man, and a man who is truly God. This means, in other words, that Christ, the only Person ever to claim to be True God-True man, is of all persons the only total one; for within Him alone, absolute interiority and absolute transcendence converge absolutely: the absolute interiority of the Holy Spirit "who is more inward in us than ourselves" and who alone "sounds the depths of God", and the absolute transcendence, the beginningless Abyss, of the unbegotten Father.⁹⁰

Thus Christ is the summit of creation and at the same time He is God: hence the unique Mediator between God and His creature, for He is God's total self-expression, an offer of salvation and at the same time man's total openness to God. So if there is a meeting place between man and God, it is He, for in Him the absolute distance between the two has been bridged and outside this locus there can be no other. For in Him meet the human and the divine, the finite and the infinite, the creature and the Creator. Hence for the encounter of the two basic spiritual hemispheres, Christ, the Incarnate Word becomes the model and the 'place', for He is the unique synthesis of interiority and transcendence. It is only in and through the Hypostatic union, then, that the inter-religious antinomy can be synthesised. Christ, the Face of the Father, is the key and the door to all inter-religious dialogue.

If we now consider further the implications of the mystery of the Incarnation, in its dynamic aspect, we can raise a few questions in the light of the present day theology of this mystery, which may apply to the Church in Dialogue. The Chalcedonian formula was rather static, being a synthesis of the Antiochian and Alexandrian approaches to the mystery of Christ, and giving us an 'ontology' of Christ, solving the problem of the unity and duality by affirming that the two natures with their distinct properties come into a perfect union. This static formula leaves out of consideration the fact that the Incarnation is the "event of salvation and brings to the whole of humanity the transforma-

tion of its destiny".⁹¹ If the mystery is considered from this 'dynamic' aspect it will be seen to have a very fruitful bearing on inter-religious dialogue. Cuttat has not, of course, developed this theme, but certain of his expressions give us the assurance that our reflections are in line with his thought.

The Word *became* flesh and *dwelt among us*. The Word *became* flesh, or, with St Paul, "His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied himself to assume the condition of a slave, and became as men are; and being as all men are..." (*Phil. 2.6f*). He who is in the divine condition (the Word was with God, was God) enters the domain of human becoming, a becoming which ends up in the ignominious death of the Cross. It is God who has become man. There is a certain immutability of the Word: He who 'became' does not cease to be what He was. He remains what He 'was' in the 'beginning', yet that does not prevent Him from becoming something that He was not. There is a change in the mode of being of the Logos: He was in the glory of the Father, now He assumes an earthly human condition in humiliation; before He was "with God", now he is "with men".⁹² We shall not enter into a discussion on the meaning of this 'becoming', but whether we say with K. Rahner that while God remains unchangeable "in Himself", He can become "in the other";⁹³ or with Malevez, that "God is capable of becoming changeable precisely because he transcends even our idea of immutability",⁹⁴ or with Galot, that the mutability results from immutability itself, for God being in Himself the fulness of life and energy there is nothing strange if he deploys them in the most varied manner in His relations with men,⁹⁵ the point is that God has freely entered into the world of becoming—that He really became something that He was not formerly.

A second consideration on the Incarnation is that the Word by becoming man enters into a deep personal relation with men—He commits Himself unreservedly to the human community. Personally He had experience of a variety of human situations, even suffering and death on a Cross. Experientially He knew what it means to live a human life. It was not a question of some type of relation with humanity, but He allowed himself to be personally affected by the joy and sorrow of the human community of which He became a member. His involvement in the community of men meant that He *depended on them*, He *learnt from them*. He grew up in wisdom and knowledge.

The implications of this mystery considered dynamically for a Church in dialogue with Hinduism are that remaining what she is, she has to become something that she is not; she has to enter into a true relationship with men and groups of other religions; she has to learn, has to grow, suffer and finally even die.

Cuttat spoke about a real newness: he wanted the dialogue partner to enter into the religious experience of the other. Does it not mean for the Church that, remaining faithful to what she is (the Word did not cease to be the Word), she must become something new in India? If she has not been hitherto a "suffering servant but rather...the conqueror's bride"⁹⁶ she has to change. "His state was divine, yet he did not cling to his equality with God but emptied Himself to assume the condition of a slave...". What form this real newness is to take we cannot as yet tell, but she should allow herself to be really affected by the religious experience of Hinduism, by entering into such an experience herself. She has perhaps to experience what "religious life means to a hindu", in herself. If she is really faithful to what she is—here Cuttat's emphasis on fidelity and renewed commitment to Christ is in place—she can truly enter into the experience of the other, and that can change her 'face'. The newness would be something 'visible': the Word became man.

In becoming man Christ committed Himself to a human community. The Church too, as His continuation on earth, is no less committed: as the *Decree on the Missionary Activity of the Church* (no. 10) says: "the Church must become part of all these groups for the same motive which led Christ to bind Himself, in virtue of His Incarnation, to the definite social and cultural conditions of those human beings among whom He dwelt". The same Decree says that the christians are in no way marked off from the rest of men by their government, language and the like (no. 15) but are themselves burdened with the same problems and responsibilities as the rest of men. The Church accepts the fact that she should also learn from others, and this is no mere teaching device but a necessity for her own fulfilment. She has to allow herself to be affected by others and to learn about men and about Christ from these religions with which she becomes a "co-worshipper" of the Father. Entering into relationship with other religious communities and learning from them does not mean syncretism or the acceptance of the claim that

all religions are equal. Though the danger in this cannot be denied, there need be no fear if the Church is faithful to herself and to her commitment to Christ. But it is imperative that she becomes a partner in the hopes and aspirations of all religious men, and a real learner.

Finally, she may have even to 'die' to certain formulations and practices (not her faith) so that she can be born again into a new life which becomes more life-giving. When she allows herself to pass through the religious experience of the hindu and tries to express her faith in his way, she may become really life-giving; only the Spirit of Christ, however, will show her the way in which she will have to undergo a life-giving death like that of her Master. These are some of the implications if we base inter-religious dialogue on the model of the Incarnation: challenging and frightening.

IV. SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

A 'spiritual dialogue' between East and West according to Cuttat demands that we first of all listen to the other in the totality of his otherness; accept him as other, as an image of God, try to enter into his spiritual experience and reproduce it in ourselves as far as possible. Such a 'first principle' calls for, and causes, another simultaneous requisite, a deeper understanding of our own faith in the light of the discovery of such an Eastern presence and action of God. Because of that, when we meet a brother of another religion, our primary question is not "what shall I tell him about Christ" but rather "what does Christ want to tell me about himself through this non-christian brother".⁹⁷ The answer will not be a simple "convert him" but rather "love him as yourself", and consequently "look at Me through the eyes of your non-christian brother"; the christian will have a providential occasion to deepen his own understanding of Christ and his faith. It is from this perspective that the approach of Cuttat can be understood, namely from the point of view of the 'fruit' of the dialogue, which is a deeper commitment to one's own faith through a better understanding and appreciation of it.

Just as a hindu when confronted with Christianity imbibes some of the christian values without forsaking his own, the christian after exploring the presence and action of God in hindu spiritualities and seeing their positive values, opts for Christ and

Christianity with an ever greater depth of understanding and commitment. His spiritual horizons have been necessarily enlarged and hand in hand with their enlargement goes an ever greater penetration of the heart of the God-Man.⁹⁸ Our encounter thus uproots mediocrity and pseudo-religiosity, and forces us to a new conversion. It also forces us to rediscover forgotten aspects of our own religion: the aspect of interiority, symbolism, the sacredness of everything, the need for descending to a deeper level of our being for a real encounter with God and other men.

The christian must manifest the interior development he has gained through contact with the other, and the deepened understanding of his faith in a more personal commitment to Christ and a deeper "interiorisation of christian revelation". It is this renewed commitment that is the 'fruit' of the dialogue. "The deep and ever deepening decision (commitment) flowing from the spiritual inter-penetration of East and West, is not to be made once and for all, but is to be repeated constantly. In that and not in syncretism or relativism lies...the highest significance of the encounter of all religions".⁹⁹ For even though a synthesis between christian and hindu spirituality is necessary and the christian dimension alone is capable of making it, christian spiritual dimensions are not transferable, as if they were exterior "helps rendered to the developing countries", but they are gifts, or more accurately, mission whose first gesture or manifestation is nothing other than "our transformation into Christ". Our task is to reproduce in ourselves this assumptive synthesis so as to "prefigure in ourselves, at a depth as close as possible to that of the Oriental, the interior transformation expected of him; or rather, the transformation which God expects in him and in me, and which He wishes to "communicate" to him through me".¹⁰⁰ Such a prefiguration of the inner transformation in me would perhaps be the sign by which Christ wishes to draw to himself the Oriental brother, who may be waiting for nothing else but this sign to recognize Christ and to follow him better perhaps than myself. Such an inner 'assumption' is what Cuttat envisages as primary, as can be gathered from the example of St Augustine to which he refers.

Dialogue is not a matter of tolerance but of understanding, a question of integrating various antinomies through the transfiguring vision and power of the Incarnate Love. To embrace all religions within a Christocentric vision of the world by discover-

ing ever deeper and broader dimensions of the inexhaustible mystery of the *totus homo-totus Deus*: this is the task before us today. Dialogue on the model of the Hypostatic Union of the Incarnate Word is a daring challenge to the christian: nothing short of a real 'incarnation' in the hindu religious culture is demanded of him. The value of the 'method' of Cuttat lies in the fact that what he proposes as a preparation for dialogue goes beyond any 'method' and calls on us to live ardently the "mutual interiority", and by a sincere charity to open the "solitary interiority", the solitary self of the hindu brother, to the mutual interiority of the intra-Trinitarian communion, to the Absolute Thou.¹⁰¹ The 'assumption' of all non-christian and pre-christian values and spiritualities must begin first of all with the christian. This process may be schematised as follows: unshakably rooted in Christ, he can open himself to the religious experience of the hindu. With his firm grip on Christ, this 'adventure' will show him that the Spirit of God has been leading India to an inconceivably new fulfilment in Christ. Reading of the hindu Scriptures will deepen in him the hindu spirituality. Within the hindu spirituality to which he has given himself, the christian becomes deeply aware of the uniqueness and transcendence of Christ and of the christian faith. Having thus gone through an inner dialogue of assumption, the christian is ready for the "external dialogue" with his non-christian brother.

A few remarks are in place. We have already pointed out more than once the unjustifiable generalisations made by Cuttat and his neglect of the bhakti trend. It remains to be remarked that the 'distance' he speaks of between man and God which is necessary according to the Western system of thinking needs to be overcome. Abhishiktananda has shown that unless we experience the non-duality of being, we have no experience of God nor of ourselves. Precisely this aspect is one of the major contributions of India to the West. On the conceptual level the distinction between the two spiritualities may be justified, but when we go beyond the level of expressions, as we must, we shall find that the difference is less than we imagine; a Christ-centred spirituality must necessarily have the so called two dimensions, and will naturally tend to an "advaita" rather than to a "distance" and "separation". The whole thesis on solitary interiority and reciprocal interiority is rather academic and theoretical, for the lives of many prominent spiritual men

of Hinduism down the centuries show that they were exceptionally open persons, not solitary. Their solitariness was no more than the solitariness advocated by christian ascetics and mystics. One may object that their openness was not due to Yoga but to grace—in fact, today there is no man outside the sphere of grace and every theory which prescind from it is purely academic and not existential. Cuttat's idea of "assumption" might sound very much like the expression of a christian superiority, but we must understand him on the background of the theology of his time.

Notwithstanding these observations we must conclude that the approach which lays stress on the inner transformation of the christian and his firm attachment to Christ before, during and after his 'venture' into the non-christian spiritualities and the establishing of the Incarnate Word as the model of an inter-religious dialogue, are two valuable contributions to the field of dialogue. We may hope that they will open to us the mystery of the hindu brother and open the mystery of the God-Man to us no less than to him.

[illegible]

FOOT NOTES

Abbreviations used in this chapter:

EC = *Expérience chrétienne et spiritualité orientale*, Desclée, 1967.
 DC = "Dialogue chrétien avec l'orient spirituel", in *Choisir*. RE =
 "The Religious Encounter of East and West" in *Thought*. SD =
The Spiritual Dialogue of East and West, Delhi, 1961. Encounter
 = *The Encounter of Religions with an Essay on the Prayer of*
Jesus.

1. J.-A. Cuttat: "Christian Experience and Oriental Spirituality" in *Concilium*, 9 (1969) no. 5, 60-64; quote, 64.
2. EC, 24; SD, 10-11.
3. Kurisumala, *A Symposium on Ashram Life*, Kurisumala, 1974, 31.
4. Cf. Klaus Klostermaier, "Hindu-Christian dialogue", in *Dialogue between Men of living Faiths*, ed. by S.J. Samartha, Geneva, 1971, 11-20, esp. 11-14; Klostermaier says that this book was circulated among the members in manuscript form. See further, Murray Rogers, "Hindu and Christian—a moment breaks", in *Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed. by Herbert Jai Singh, Bangalore, 1967, 104-117. esp. 107f. Various meetings were held at Nagpur, Almora, Rajpur, Delhi etc.
5. P. Rossano, "Christian Experience and Eastern Spirituality", in *Bulletin of the Secretariate for non-Christians*, no. 2, Oct. 1966. 52-67, quote, 53.
6. M. Dhavamony, "Christian Experience and Hindu Spirituality", in *Gregorianum* 48 (1967) 776-791; quote, 776. We are much indebted to this study in various sections of our exposé.
7. Desclée, New York, 1960, which is a translation of *La Rencontre des Religions*, Aubier, Paris, 1957.
8. Cuttat, "Asiens Inkognito im europäischen Geistesleben", in *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, 67 (1959) 35-55, esp. 55; RE, 487; EC, 85.
9. RE, 485.
10. Cf. DC, 18; RE, 486. These assertions are not "proved" by Cuttat and for our purpose it is not important to establish the exactness of these claims.
11. RE, 486; DC, 18. We shall not discuss here the accuracy of these assertions. It may be observed that Dr. Radhakrishnan would be in perfect agreement with such a view, Cf. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, 187, 189, 206-7.
12. Cf. EC, 76-77; SD, 30f.
13. Cf. SD, 12f.
14. Cf. EC, 78f; SD, 13; Encounter, 30f; the most basic article of Cuttat for this section is "Phänomenologie und Begegnung der Religionen" in *Studia Philosophica*, XVIII (1958) 45-89. As this word "phenomenon" appears often in the writings of Cuttat, we should note what he means by it: by phenomenon he does

- not mean exterior and transitory appearance in the current use of the word, but in its etymological meaning of manifestation (*phainomenon*) of the permanent essence (*eidos*) of an object perceived from within. see also Van der Leeuw, *Religion in Essence and Manifestation*, vol. 2, New York, 1963, 671-678, 683-689.
15. EC, 78-79; Cf. Cuttat, "Meeting of Religions" in *Relations among Religions Today*, ed. Moses Jung, Leiden, 1963, 105-108, esp. 106.
 16. EC, 79.
 17. We may, however, ask if it is possible or necessary to place in parenthesis the "explicit adherence to my faith" and our basic religious convictions. It is not possible because faith may be said to be a "constitutive human dimension" which cannot be suspended (Cf. R. Panikkar) "The Internal Dialogue—the insufficiency of the so-called phenomenological 'Epoché' in the religious encounter", in *Religion and Society*, XV (1968) 3, 55-66). If it were merely a question of 'formulations', 'beliefs' (as distinct from faith) it would be possible to 'suspend' them. Rev. John Cole who knew Dr Cuttat personally and had participated in the Raipur, Nagpur and Almora meetings with Cuttat told me recently that Cuttat was very "jealous of his faith" and that the *epoché* did not mean placing in parenthesis the explicit adherence to the faith, as is clear also from Cuttat's 'Golden Rule' which we shall discuss in a moment.
 18. Cf. J. Wach, *Types of Religious Experience, Christian and non-Christian*, Chicago, 1957, 2nd ed., 7.
 19. O. Lacombe, "Liminaire", in *Recherches et débats*, 37 (1961) 12.
 20. RE, 498; see for this section, DC, 22; EC, 86f; "Phänomenologie..." 89f.
 21. Cf. *Encounter*, 29-30. Dr. Cuttat speaks of the "Monotheistic outlook of the West and the metaphysical perspective of the East" (p. 29), making a very general classification of the West and the East as personalistic and impersonalistic, which is not justified, for the East is not altogether devoid of the personalistic aspect of God, Cf. the Bhakti trend. Cuttat makes quite a few unjustifiable generalizations.
 22. The reciprocal interiority of christian spirituality and the solitary interiority of hindu spirituality are not complementary on the same plane as, say, the sexes, for that would lead to syncretism, but their complementarity is vertical, like that of nature and grace, one is subordinate to the other.
 23. Cf. SD, 9f "Die Spiritualität Asiens", in *Hochland*, 1966-67, 97-110, see 98f.
 24. Cf. Cuttat, "Expérience chrétienne..." in *La Mystique et les mystiques*, Paris, 1965, ed. by Ravier, 890.
 25. Eliade. "Encounter at Ascona, Spiritual Discipline" in *Eranos Yearbook*, London, 1960, xxi; SD, 9, 29.

26. Cf. EC, 97f.
27. EC, 98.
28. *Yoga Sūtra*, 1. 41 reads: "(The mind stuff) from which, as from a precious gem, fluctuations have dwindled away, is, with reference either to the knower or to the process-of-knowing or to the object-to-be-known, in the state of resting upon (one) of these (three) and in the state of being tinged by (one) of these (three), and (thus) is in the balanced-state", *Yoga System of Patanjali*, The Harvard Oriental Series, vol. 17, 1914, 77-78.
29. Dhavamony, *op. cit.*, 784.
30. M. Eliade, *Yoga: Immortality and Freedom*, London, 1958, 77; see, 52.
31. *Yoga*, Penguin Books, 1961, 12.
32. Cf. EC, 107f, 234f.
33. EC, 280; see 231f.
34. Cf. EC, 160, for the expression "sur-interiorité" which I have rendered "super-interiority".
35. Cf. EC, 80f. We cannot develop this theme here, but it may be in place to suggest some references: Swami Akhilananda, *Hindu View of Christ*, Phil. Library, N.Y. 1949; M. K. Gandhi, *The Message of Jesus Christ*. Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan. 1963; M. C. Parekh, *A Hindu's portrait of Jesus Christ*, Harmony Home, Rajkot, 1953; Keshub Chandra Sen, *Lectures in India*, Cassell and Company, London, 1904; Various books of Radhakrishnan: Cf. e.g. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, 163f for a description of Jesus of Nazareth; Cf. also, Balawant A.M. Paradkar, "Hindu interpretation of Christ from Vivekananda to Radhakrishnan", in *The Indian Journal of Theology*, XVIII (1969) 1, 65-80; "A critical evaluation of the Hindu interpretation of Christ", by Fallon, *ibid.*, 81-87.
36. It must be noted that here a theology of christian 'Assumption' is involved. We can only refer the reader to a very brief summary of present day trends in the article of Fr Dhavamony referred to earlier, 779f; Cf. EC, 123.
37. Dr Cuttat considers the antinomy "Interiority and transcendence" in *Encounter*, 35f. The opposition is unfortunate for interiority is opposed either to exteriority or in the present context to reciprocal interiority; both interiority and exteriority can lead to transcendence.
38. Cf. DC, 20f. On the contrary, Lacombe says that precisely at this point, there is an opening to the Absolute—at a metaphysical level, not phenomenological.
39. For this paragraph see *Encounter*, 39-40, 31.
40. Cf. DC, 19.
41. *Encounter*, 79; see 73f.
42. "Christliche und Asiatische Spiritualität", 232.
43. We do not accept the view of Cuttat, as we shall see later; for the moment however we retain his vocabulary; see, DC, 22: "Christliche...." 223f.
44. St Thomas, I. II, 28, 2; DC, 22; Mouroux, *Christian Experience*.

- The Christian loves his neighbour sometimes more than the latter loves himself: when he has by infidelity, disfigured in himself the Image that he is; he has ceased to love himself really, and yet the christian brother loves him; see, *EC* 231f.
45. *EC*, 233-34.
46. For this section, see *EC*, 127ff; Dhavamony, "Christian Experience," 788f. It may be noted that Cuttat's generalisation does not touch all the hindu view points—it affects primarily the *advaita* system of thought.
47. *EC*, 135.
48. The word "cosmic" means the world of appearance, of exteriority; "meta-cosmic" means that which transcends the external world of appearance and is interior, spiritual; "trans-meta-cosmic" means that which transcends both; it is the Absolute, Personal, the Other, who is met by the creature in a confrontation rather than in an identification; *RE*, 502, editor's note. Cuttat himself identifies this term with "supernatural"; "separated from His creation by an absolute distance which only He can cross through grace", *ibid.*, 506.
49. *EC*, 136.
50. J. Maritain, *Quatre essais sur l'Esprit dans sa condition charnelle*, Paris, 1939, 131-177, esp. 154; cf. also *EC*, 137-8.
51. *EC*, 138.
52. For this section see, *EC*, 139f; *DC*, 20f; *RE*, 505; *SD*, 18f. F. Moriarty, "Creation in the Old Testament", *Studia Missionalia*, XVIII (1969), 297-314.
53. *DC*, 21. To be more precise we would have to say that these two texts *could be* interpreted as an example of 'assumption', for we have no proof that St Francis knew about the ideas of the Orient.
54. *DC*, 21.
55. Cf. *ibid.*; *EC*, 154; *Encounter*, 57-58; *SD*, 33f; *Phénoménologie*, 66. The idea of myth is developed in great detail by Cuttat in *RE*, 493f.
56. Dr. Radhakrishnan says: "A suffering God, a deity with a crown of thorns, cannot satisfy the religious soul", in *Philosophy of Rabindranath Tagore*, London, 1918, 15.
57. Cf. *EC*, 160; *DC*, 21-22.
58. Cf. *EC*, 160; *DC*, 22.
59. *Srimad Bhagavad Gita*, Calcutta, 1956, 99.
60. Johanns, "La Philosophie religieuse du Vedanta", in *Nouvelle revue théologique*, 69 (1947), 685-6; *Light of the East*, June, 1930, 6.
61. Jean Filliozat "Docétisme chrétien et docétisme indien", in *L'Homme devant Dieu*, III, Aubier, 1964, 7-13; quote; 11.
62. Prof. Lacombe "L'Eglise une et diverse", in *Semaines des Intellectuels Catholiques*, 1961, 159-167, esp. 164-5.
63. *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Oxford, 1969, 188-4. But Prof. Zaehner insists on the mythical character of Krishna.
64. M. Dhavamony, *Christian Experience*, 1790.

65. *ibid.* L. Renou makes the Incarnation one with the Avatar: "It is the equivalent of our doctrine of the Word-made-flesh", *Religions of Ancient India*, 65.
66. Cf. *EC*, 294f; 360f; *Asiens Inkognito*, 41f; *SD*, 23ff. We cannot discuss this vast theme here; in fact it raises more questions than it solves. Hence we leave it with only a reference to the conclusion of Dr Cuttat.
67. Cf. *SD*, 25.
68. This complex problem has been studied by Cuttat in various parts of his work, especially, in *Encounter*, 87-159; *EC*, 289f; see, *The Prayer of Jesus*, Desclée, 1967.
69. Cf. *Encounter*, 153. See also 99, 105, 87, 117f.
70. Cf. *EC*, 268; "Östlicher Advent und Gnostische Versuchung", in *Kairos*, 3 (1960), 145-163; "Vergeistigungs" Technik und Umgestaltung in Christus", in *Kairos*, I (1959), 18-30.
71. M. Dhavamony, *Christian Experience*, 790.
72. Cuttat, *SD*, 35; see *EC*, 122; 261f.
73. D.S. Sarma, *A Primer of Hinduism*, 70f, 82.
74. L. Renou, *Religions of Ancient India*, 70. Cf. Lemaître, *Hinduism*, 85; N. Macnikol, *Psalms of Maratha Saints*, 65; 68; etc.; M. Dhavamony, *The Mystery of God according to the Bhakti Mystics of Modern Hinduism*, *Studia Missionalia*, 17 (1968), 147-167; *Love of God*, esp. part. III.
75. Cf. M. Dhavamony, *Love of God*, 223.
76. Cf. *EC*, 122; 29 note 3, 262.
77. *Primer*, 88-89; Cf. Radhakrishnan, *The Gita*, 54f. For further examples of the conjunction of bhakti and jñāna, Cf. Dhavamony, *Love of God*, 127f, giving the example of Meykanta, a 13th century Tamil Saivite bhakta.
78. Cf. *EC*, 261f.
79. For this section, see *RE*, 488f; *Encounter*, 67f.
80. *Encounter*, 67.
81. *RE*, 489. It is beyond my scope to examine critically these statements of Cuttat as they are only an introduction to his thought on the relation between the Hypostatic Union and dialogue.
82. Cf. *RE*, 492.
83. *RE*, 492.
84. Cf. J. Ratzinger, "The Problem of the Absolute in Christianity" in *Teaching all Nations*, IV (1967) 2, 183-197, esp. 184f, where the author discusses the difference between the monotheistic West and the Mystic East. He refers to Cuttat.
85. *RE*, 505. Cuttat however points out that Ramanuja is an exception to this "backward" movement, *RE*, 507f; he also says that the division into the two hemispheres is only a "matter of predominance" and not of exclusion, *ibid*, 507.
86. *ibid*. 506-7.
87. *RE*, 506. This possibility is based on the principle of analogy between the microcosm (man), the macrocosm (universe) and metacosm (God). The ontological analogy implies an inner con-

tinuity between human and divine consciousness. Spiritual integration works out, realises and actualises this identity. In his explanation Cuttat merely follows the advaita trend of Indian thought. It is obviously beyond our scope here to discuss the God-world-man relation in different systems of Indian thought.

88. Cf. *RE*, 510-511.
89. K. Rahner and H. Vorgrimler, *Theological Dictionary*, Herder, 1965, 240.
90. *RE*, 511; for further theological justification, see Schillebeeckx, *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*, New York, 1963, 9-45.
91. J. Galot, "Dynamisme de l'Incarnation, au-delà de la formule de Chalcedoine" in *Nouvelle revue théol.*, 93 (1971) 225-244, quote, 227. We are indebted to this article for some of the reflections in the following pages.
92. R. Schnackenburg, *Gospel according to St John*, I, Herder, 1968, 267: "The *egeneto* announces a change in the mode of being of the Logos".
93. K. Rahner, "Considerations générales sur la Christologie", in *Problèmes actuels de Christologie*, ed. H. Bouëssé, Bruges, 1965, 25.
94. Malevez, in *Problèmes...*, 402.
95. Cf. Galot, "Dynamisme", 239.
96. R.C. Zaehner, *The Catholic Church and World Religions*. London, 1964, 11.
97. Cf. *RE*, 20f; *SD*, 31f; *EC*, 304.
98. Cf. *EC*, 86-87.
99. "Phänomenologie...", 89.
100. *EC*, 304.
101. "Spiritualität...", 232; *DC*, 20.

CHAPTER IV

CHRIST, THE FULFILMENT OF THE RELIGIOUS QUEST (PROF. R.C. ZAEHNER)

Introduction

"An eccentric and a delightful man passed away from us; but also a great man was taken away", wrote Michael Dummett about the "eccentric extraordinary",¹ Professor Robert Charles Zaehner, at his death on 26th November, 1974. He fell down dead on his way to evening mass. Converted in 1946 at the age of 33, he was a staunch, indeed fervent catholic, and attended mass daily. Successor to Dr Radhakrishnan as Spalding Professor of Eastern Religions and Ethics at the University of Oxford and Fellow of All Souls College, R.C. Zaehner was born in 1913 and was educated at Tonbridge School and the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. After he had been in various forms of government services abroad, he dedicated himself more fully to his subject of special interest: Religions. He was specially interested in varieties of mysticism. He was a prolific writer averaging nearly a book a year.

In several books² he attempts to study the historical development of various religions as far as possible "from within" and then correlates them "with aspects of catholic Christianity which are of importance to me".³ Zaehner indeed denies the possibility of pure objectivity in studies on one religion by the convinced follower of another religion. "Complete objectivity", he says, "is never attainable in practice except in minute points of scholarship".⁴ It is possible, he argues, to arrive at an objective interpretation of a particular verse of the Bible for example, but in the exposition of the Bible as a whole or of any religion, "you are bound to interpret it, and any interpretation is bound to be influenced either for or against, by previous interpretations as well as by one's own theological bias...".⁵ This does not mean that his works are purely subjective interpretations, for he studies his material as far as possible in its historical context and situation, and interprets it according to his general convictions. In a number of his books his basic conviction is that in Hinduism there is a definite movement from pantheism to mono-

theism, "towards the belief in one supreme and personal God".⁶ He studies certain concepts like salvation and God in various religions and shows that there is not only a development but also a convergence of ideas—towards Christ. We shall of course not examine all the converging ideas, but limit ourselves to two: God and Salvation.

A final remark is in place. Prof. Zaehner's deep love for the sacred books and religions of the East is matched only by his deep aversion and opposition to theology,⁷ also to the Old Testament⁸ and to St Augustine⁹ on whom he places the burden of all the evils in the Church. This opposition would not interest us if he did not deal with strictly theological questions like God, Grace, Sin, the Fall and Salvation. He by no means limits himself to a mere phenomenology of religions. His own theological sources are mostly authors like Bernanos, Rousseau, Balzac and Teilhard de Chardin whom he calls "fringe Catholics". While no one can question his personal taste in selecting them, a theologian may be tempted to question the weight of opinions derived from them. But we shall leave aside his theological likes and dislikes as far as possible and concern ourselves only with his approach to Hinduism. We shall first examine some of his basic convictions in his approach to non-Christian religions, then we shall study how he traces the development of the ideas of God and of salvation, and draw the conclusion that he sees Christ as the fulfilment of Hinduism.

1. *Basic Convictions*

a) *Differences between various Religions*

Any person attempting a comparative study of religions must first resist the belief that there is a "fundamental unity underlying all the great religions", or even that there is a possibility of reaching it by reducing all religions to a common pattern.¹⁰ The fact is that there exists only an apparent unity, "apparent, verbal and therefore fictitious".¹¹ According to Zaehner the difference between the religions of the world is so basic, that they talk of different things: "It is then only too true that the basic principles of Eastern and Western, which in practice means Indian and Semitic, thought are, I will not say irreconcilably opposed; they are simply not starting from the same premises; ... The great religions are talking at cross purposes".¹²

His ground for saying this is that all the great religions of the East and West are concerned with different things: the West with the account of the saving deeds of a transcendent, Creator, personal God who calls man to an obedient response to His initiative, and who saves him from his sins. Whereas in the East, obedience to the will of a God is not a pre-requisite of religion; salvation does not necessarily mean salvation from sin but liberation from the human condition as such. The Indian religions are not concerned so much with the existence or non-existence of a saving God or with the service we owe him, as "with the practical ways and means of escaping from this eternal round of ever-recurring birth and death, re-birth and re-death".¹³ In the catholic religion there is an emphasis on dogmas and right beliefs—Hinduism is not concerned with 'right beliefs', though it is not altogether free of 'dogmatic beliefs'. It accepts certain 'truths' like transmigration and the eternity of the soul quite unquestionably, but it is not a religion with a body of doctrines like Christianity. On the nature of God, man, the soul, the world, time, our attitude to the world and to men, there is no agreement. Christianity demands involvement in the world, and love for one's fellowmen, whereas Indian religions demand escape from the world and detachment. When the Buddha, for example, speaks of love it is rather a "love without attachment", that is, without attachment to the person loved, for the person is not a permanent reality, or of any value; whereas in Christianity person has a positive value. When Hinduism insists on personal experience, Christianity insists on faith and obedience.¹⁴ More might be said about the differences between Christianity and Indian religions and about the difficulty of meeting Hinduism, but the difficulties which Zaehner enunciates are similar to those we have seen in the previous chapters. Yet in the meeting between Christianity and Hinduism he notes these further obstacles: "The Church's infamous record in the matter of persecution...the easy assumption of superiority on the part of the missionaries and the claims of a monopoly of truth....Scandals there had to be, and the history of the Church is surely one long scandal".¹⁵ These elements have in a way vitiated and marred the face of the "Bride of Christ".

b) Convergence towards Christ

In spite of their diversity, the various religions of the

world seem to tend to one point: to Christ and to His Church. This point of course will receive all our attention later but a word must be said here. Zaehner sees that, at least in theory, our world is becoming *one* world. Thanks to the technological progress and the facility of communication which abolishes distances, mankind seems to be moving towards an ever-closer union. But when Zaehner speaks of religions converging, he does not think of a "higher synthesis" of all religions. For him the brute facts rule out any hope of a unification in which the great religions of the world share their "higher insights", as Prof. Toynbee and others seem to believe.¹⁶ Therefore a "higher synthesis" of religions is fictitious; but Zaehner envisages Christ drawing all things to Himself, whom the Father prepared from the beginning of time through manifestations and revelations at sundry times and in diverse manners.

c) *The Church Must Learn*

It is Zaehner's conviction that in our approach to non-Christian religions we ought to be inspired by the example of the early Fathers of the Church. His stand on the matter is similar to that of Father Johanns. Without in any way being unfaithful to her mission, the Church of the early Patristic age assimilated the riches and wisdom she found in the religions and cultures around her. Zaehner affirms that if the Church, which claims to be universal, remains unmindful of the religious and cultural legacy of Asia, confining herself to the line of Graeco-Roman tradition, she will have no chance of survival. The Church can survive, he says, only "by showing that it can assimilate not only what is digestible to the Christian constitution in Plato and Aristotle, but also whatever in Oriental religion seems to point the way to Christ".¹⁷ Indian religions have much that is not only of great intrinsic value but of value for the Church. "Christianity has much to learn from them, much indeed it *must* learn from them..."¹⁸

2. *Approach to non-Christian Religions*

To work towards a harmony of religions—only a discordant concord or a concordant discord—from the point of view of the comparative study of religions, there are various possibilities,

which depend on points of contact. We must now consider those which Zaehner considers important.

a) *Sacred Scriptures*

Zaehner rules out the possibility of meeting on the plane of philosophical, devotional or secular literature, but a meeting is possible, he holds, on the level of the Sacred Books of the various religions. In the Sacred Scriptures you will find "harmonies far more profound and discords far more telling than you are likely to meet with in the philosophical systems..."¹⁹ The attempt at reconciling Indian philosophy with Thomism, he says, "does not seem a very fruitful approach". One may answer that it is quite true that we can profitably confront one religion with another only by returning to the divine sources of a religion, which are anterior to all philosophical and theological developments, but allowing for the strict necessity of such a meeting at the sources, we cannot rule out completely the need for a confrontation at a systematic level, a need which we saw earlier in the chapters on Father Johanns and Prof. Lacombe.

b) *Christian Charity*

Though Zaehner insists on the differences between religions, he insists also that in our approach to non-christian religions "we waste our time in pin-pointing the differences that separate us since they are obvious enough; rather we must seek to understand them from within",²⁰ and try to understand how they also penetrate the divine mysteries. The example and teaching of his 'hero', Pope John,²¹ stand him in good stead. He insists that a genuine sense of charity is a necessary pre-requisite in our approach to Hinduism: a charity which makes the christian message real and credible and at the same time truthfully inquires into other religions "from within". In past centuries Christianity and imperialism went hand in hand so that the Church came to mission lands "not as a suffering servant but rather as the conqueror's bride".²²

c) *Mysticism and death to self*

According to Zaehner, the most basic and central point of contact between Christianity and Hinduism is mysticism. Oppos-

ing Dr Kraemer's and the Protestant "suspicion of mysticism" he concludes: "Mysticism...is part and parcel of the christian tradition—of the Christian Faith...and it is in its mystical element precisely that Christianity may be a 'light to lighten the Gentiles' and the fulfilment of their hopes. Here and nowhere else, can it enter into a dialogue with Indian religion in terms that the latter can understand".²³ He is not as exclusive as he sounds, for as we saw earlier, he sees points of contact at the level of the Scriptures and of charity which is wider than mysticism. Besides, he accepts also the importance of "christian experience", understood in a wider sense than mysticism, for the meeting between religions. The "here and nowhere else" shows the importance of mysticism as a meeting point, an importance greater than Protestants accord to it. Zaehner envisages christian mysticism as the culminating point and fulfilment of Hinduism as follows: in Hinduism itself there is a development from a nature mysticism to a mysticism of union between two persons in love. But the mysticism of the Gita is only a promise, not as yet the fulfilment. It only speaks of the "possibility" of a union of love between the human soul and God.

It must be made clear at the start that Zaehner does not at any time consider an approach to Hinduism alone, but to all the Eastern religions. In our exposition, limiting ourselves to Hinduism and those ideas which apply to it, we shall examine how he proposes an approach to it through a study of the development of the ideas of God and of salvation in it. The development clearly points to a personal God who finds his best expression in Christ. In the idea of salvation, we shall include mysticism, and two derivative characteristics of the hindu who is striving for salvation: his solitariness and his other-worldliness, or his neglect or disregard of the phenomenal world of matter. Finally we shall discuss how this growing sense of a personal God and salvation in communion with Him finds its perfection only in Christ and in His Church. We shall examine the idea of the Incarnation in this context, for in the Incarnation, the communion between man and God, all the aspirations of Hinduism meet. We can only try to outline some of the central features of this progress to Christ.

I. THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE IDEA OF GOD

Underlying Zaehner's approach to Hinduism is the conviction that in Hinduism there is a definite development towards belief in one supreme and personal God. The tracing of a definite and clear development presupposes a knowledge of the period of each of the texts used, and Zaehner, as we saw earlier, studies the texts of a religion in their historical context as far as possible. It is beyond my competence and scope to examine his findings at that level, and besides, chronology is not stressed in Hinduism and the different books of the Upanishads cannot be said with certainty to belong to this or that period. We shall therefore merely present Zaehner's ideas without discussing the chronological aspect and shall outline the development only up to the Gita, inclusively, though he goes beyond that and considers *Saiva Siddhānta* and other sects. The Gita is of general interest to the whole of Hinduism and has clearly present in it the idea of a personal God.

The first phase is "frankly polytheist"²⁴ especially in the Vedic period in which the major gods are Varuna, Agni, Indra, Rudra, Soma and Vishnu. The first nine books of the Rig Veda are manifestly polytheist, but already towards the end of the Rig Veda we notice that the plurality of gods becomes less distinguishable; the Vedic seers were interested in what constituted the unitary and unifying principle of the universe. Hence the various gods become diverse names of a single reality: "... what is but one the wise call (by) manifold (names). They call it Agni, Yama, Matarisvan" (Rig Veda 1. 164. 46). Zaehner sees in this verse the beginning of "classical hindu pantheism".²⁵ Another tendency towards the end of the Vedic period is for these gods to become more and more functional, and so we have *Prajāpati*, the Lord of creatures, *Visvakarman*, the Maker of all things. Commenting on Rig-Veda 10. 90. 129, which prefigures the pantheistic monism of the Upanishads, Zaehner observes that "*Prajāpati*, then, the Lord of creatures, is both a transcendent God who rules according to law and an immanent spirit who is the life of every living thing: he is God the Father and God the Holy Spirit, though as Lord of Creatures he is predominantly the first".²⁶

Of the great gods of classical Hinduism, Siva and Vishnu, the former is prefigured in the Vedic Rudra, and the latter is

practically unimportant. Indra perhaps prefigures Vishnu's avatar Krishna, for Indra too is a man-god, a hero, a friend and a father.

The Upanishad period, however, is far from susceptible of clear classification, for as Zaehner observes, "in the Upanishads monism, pantheism and monotheism co-exist: they are not regarded as being mutually incompatible".²⁷ Though there are diverse tendencies in the Upanishads, we may distinguish two major trends: one towards absolute monism, of Brahman-*Ātman* identification, which culminates in the *Māndukya* Upanishad, and the other towards a theism which reaches its culmination in the *Svetāsvatara* Upanishad. In the "absolute non-duality culminates one great stream of Hindu thought".²⁸ This trend is only one of the schools of the Vedānta, but from the "philosophical point of view ..., it is still the most important in India...".²⁹ This trend, present in most of the Upanishads, was developed into a school of monism by Sankara. However, as we observed earlier, Zaehner is concerned with the theistic trend, so we shall briefly outline the development of this trend which culminates in the *Svetāsvatara* Upanishad and in the Gita.

1. *The Theistic Trend*

In his *Comparison of Religions* Zaehner considered *Isvara* of the Yoga of Patanjali as the first prefiguration of the fully theistic God of the Gita. In his later work, *Hinduism*, he no longer considers him so; rather it is Indra of the Vedas who prefigures in some ways Krishna, the Incarnate God, a person calling men for communion.³⁰ The quest of the Upanishads is the quest for the eternal, both within man and the universe without, and Zaehner says that the starting point of all the Upanishads is the question: "what is Brahman?"³¹

By the time of the Upanishads the word *brāhman* ordinarily meant the Absolute, that is, "what remains unchanged in a world of change". But the Upanishadic sages wanted a more accurate description of the Brahman and thus began their speculation. They looked for something that does not die. They saw that food kept life going even when individuals died. Hence the first great discovery: Brahman is food (*Taittiriya Up.* 2.2; 3.7; 3.1). But Indian theology does not stop there: gradually after successive attempts to identify Brahman with food (matter), breath (spirit) (*Kausitaki Up.* 3.2), space

(infinity) (*Brh Up.* 5.1), the Real and the Real of the Real (*Brh Up.* 5.4.1; 2.1.20) and Consciousness (*Aitareya Up.* 5.3), the Indian theologians established that Brahman was "first and foremost an eternal mode of existence which transcended space and time, mind and matter, cause and effect",³² and then as the unchangeable source of the whole universe of change and of human souls which are eternal.

From the time of Upanishads Hinduism had instinctively understood that the cosmos was a unity in which man shared, and which he reflected in his being, and that the eternal infinite within man was identical with the eternal ground of the ever changing cosmos. But a Brahman considered merely as an eternal mode of existence, did not seem an adequate explanation for the connecting link between the two. At this stage the terms Brahman, *ātman* and *Purusha* were used indifferently to denote the changeless ground of the universe, abiding through phenomenal change. But since this did not satisfy, there dawned the idea of a personal being "who standing not only outside the world of space and time (...) but outside and beyond the sphere of eternal substances as well, ordered and controlled them both".³³

The *Isā Up.* starts with the conviction: "This universe must be pervaded by a Lord". The *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Up.* has him as the eternal sovereign of all contingent beings: "This self is indeed the Lord of all contingent beings" (2.5.15), "Lord of what was and what is and yet to be..." (4.4.15). In *Katha Up.* (2. 23) he appears as a God of grace who is to be known only through his own grace:

This Self cannot be found by instruction
Not by intellect nor yet by much lore heard;
He can be found only by such as he chooses
To such does he reveal his bodily form.

Commenting on this passage Zaehner says, "the dialogue between God and man in India has started".³⁴

The superiority of the personal God over the impersonal Absolute becomes clear in the *Mundaka Upanishad* (2.1.2): For divine and formless is the Person... He, the All highest, beyond the Imperishable. In the *Katha* and *Mundaka*, therefore, the figure of a personal God emerges, Lord of both Brahman and of the world of becoming. Referring to *Mundaka* 2.1.2. Zaehner observes, "Here for the first time the absolute transcendence of

the personal God is affirmed.³⁵ There are also passages which affirm the simultaneous transcendence and immanence of the Person, so that Zaehner can say, "thus at a very early stage the hindus had worked out a clear concept of deity as being both transcendent and immanent, distinct from the universe though indwelling it".³⁶ He refers mostly to the following passages: "He who abiding in the earth, is other than the earth, whom the earth does not know, whose body is the earth, who controls the earth from within—he is the Self within you (*te*), the Inner Controller, the Immortal" (*Brh Up.* 3.7.3) and the passage from the *Chāndogya* Upanishad: "He is my Self within the heart, smaller than a grain of rice...greater than the earth...greater than all these worlds" (3.14.4)—one of the most important texts in the formulation of the Upanishadic idea of God, for here we have a concept of someone who transcends the world, sustains it and indwells it. Zaehner calls it a "definition of the simultaneous transcendence and immanence of God".³⁷ The transcendence, it should be said, is not absolute, as there is no clear idea of a *creatio-ex-nihilo*,³⁸ and consequently no clear idea of a contingent being; even in the *Svetāsvatara Up.* and in the Gita, where the idea of a personal God is developed, "God always tends to become identified with the sum-total of the universe, and even when it is said that he transcends the universe and is its sovereign Lord, he never stands apart from it as Yahweh stands apart from creation..."³⁹

The *Svetāsvatara* is a consistently theistic Upanishad. The God of this Upanishad has positive qualities and a distinct personality. In this the *Purusha* is identified with Rudra-Siva, the supreme God, who is the one who surveys and directs all causes (1.3), sustains everything (1.8), rules the whole world with his power, and is the protector of all (3.2). He is a mighty Lord (3.12), hidden in all things (6.5-11; 5.1) he pervades all (6.11) and dwells in the hearts of men, though he is the all exalted Self (4.17). Affection (*bhāva*) can take hold of him (5.14). He is the beginning and efficient cause of all (6.5), source and origin of all gods (3.4), highest God and Lord of all Lords (6.7), unbegotten (6.9); by knowledge of him man is freed (4.16). Finally he is a benign God (5.14; 4.16). As far as the Upanishads are concerned, the concept of God has reached the highest point. Now we shall consider the last stage of the development, namely in the Gita.

2. *The Gita*

Since we shall have to deal with the *Gita* often, we may usefully spend a few moments considering certain general questions about it. Zaehner sees it as a far more unitary work than many authors are willing to accept. He concedes that a really accurate translation is impossible, yet he spares no effort to make one in his book. He prefers the interpretation of Ramanuja, and would certainly hold the view that "Sankara's commentary is a complete perversion of the *Gitā*".⁴⁰ For Zaehner it is the most significant sacred text in the whole history of religion and the greatest of the mystical classics. It is the "crowning glory of Indian theism, and as such it has largely replaced the older scriptures in popular esteem".⁴¹ Finally, according to Zaehner, it is the *Bhagavad-Gita* and not the *vedānta* which could be a starting point for fruitful converse between eastern immanentism and western transcendentalism. We may observe in passing that even the *advaitins* accept the importance of the *Gita*. Swami Chidbhavananda says, "it is the essence of the *Upanishads*...in the sense that the *vedānta* philosophy is made easy of understanding".⁴² But his perspective is different, for according to him the *Gita* is from beginning to end a "grand commentary on the sublime statement—*Thou art That*". So both the theists and the *advaitins* find the *Gita* their most important book.

Though originally not a part of the *Sruti* (revelation) and though it is only a didactic poem like a hundred others in the *Epic*, it has become one of the most important religious books for the hindu, a fact that can be explained only by saying that it introduces "an entirely new type of religion that had more popular appeal than the *Upanishads*".⁴³ Zaehner rightly observes that the "entirely new" ought to be qualified, as the religion of *bhakti* is already present in the form of love for Vishnu and Siva in the rest of the *Epic*. The popularity of the *Gita* may also be due to the abiding value of its teaching. Krishna teaches that it is not wisdom that saves but trust in God who grants the true knowledge of the nature of things that is necessary for salvation (*Gita* 7. 12-15). Though he affirms that he is the same in all the persons and not a respecter of persons, he adds immediately that "those who commune with Me in love's devotion (*abide*) in Me and I in them" (9.29), which means in the context that without love one can reach *Nirvāṇa* but not the God

of love. The fruits of salvation are open to all classes of society. Then there is the teaching of the higher bhakti, that, in order to draw near to God man has to be first integrated in himself before he can enter into communion with God. This God of love has his terrible form as well, as is manifested in the eleventh chapter. According to Zaehner, the whole teaching of the Gita is summed up in the last chapter, as we shall see later.

3. *God in the Gita*

Concluding his long analysis of the idea of God in the early chapters of the Gita, Zaehner says: "Thus the idea of God in the early chapters of the Gita develops from the *Deus otiosus* of the classical Yoga...to that of the Highest Person who is supreme Lord and Creator of the Universe..."⁴⁴ The God of the Gita is the creator, sustainer and destroyer of the universe (10.20), the source of all (10.8); all things exist in and through him (10.39). Krishna is the supreme Being, the highest Brahman who transcends the perishable and the imperishable (10.12-13; 8.22). He is the "Sublime Person", "All-Highest Self" (15.17-18; 10.12). The real message of the Gita, says Zaehner, "does not lie in its philosophy, but in its teaching that God is not a passionless Absolute but the lover of man's soul, indeed Love itself".⁴⁵ In the Gita it is obvious that God loves man. In one of the major texts of the Gita we have:

And now again give ear to this my highest Word, of all the most mysterious: 'I love you well'. Therefore will I tell you your salvation. Bear Me in mind, love Me and worship Me, sacrifice, prostrate yourself to Me: so will you come to Me, I promise you truly, for you are dear to Me. (18. 64-65)

Chapter Twelve also proclaims in very clear terms that God loves man. Hence we can say that the doctrine of God's love for men is clearly found in the Gita. But the proposition "God is Love" is not clearly found in the Gita. It is a later development appearing for example in *Tirumantiram* of Tirumular, who says,

The ignorant think that love (*anpu*) and God (*civam*) are two [different things]; they do not know that love is God. After knowing that love is God they remain possessed of love which is God.⁴⁶

Also chapter 12.13-20 of the Gita shows that Krishna's preference is not for the passionately devoted worshipper, but for the

wholly detached sage who acknowledges his overlordship. This God of the Gita is not only a God who loves man, but, is also a God who demands loving and exclusive service: "However evil a man's livelihood may be, let him worship Me with love and serve no other, then he shall be reckoned among the good..."⁴⁷ It may be in order at this point to say a word about Krishna.

Krishna, according to Zaehner, "transcends transcendence",⁴⁸ by which he means that Krishna is superior to the Absolute Brahman. The Krishna of the Mahabharata is a god of trickery: "As a moral character he is utterly dwarfed by the righteous Yudhis-thira, the just man and the reluctant servant of an unjust God".⁴⁹ The Krishna of the Puranas, on the other hand, is neither a teacher nor a warrior but a "comely young cowherd", passionately in love with the cowherd girls. Since the human element was lacking in the Gita, it was abundantly supplied by the Puranas. Perhaps the relation between the two Krishnas is best expressed by Zaehner when he says: "If it is true to say that the Bhagavad-Gita demythologized the Krishna of the Mahabharata, it is equally true to say that the Bhagavata Purana remythologized him..."⁵⁰

Though the Krishna of the Gita is the fulfilment of the Upanishads, and is a God of love, he is only a myth. "He is the idea of God incarnate in the Indian mind".⁵¹ In various places Zaehner affirms that Krishna is only a myth.⁵² He admits that the differences between the avatar and the Incarnation are great, yet he rarely ever uses the word avatar; his chief interest lies in pointing out the mythical Krishna who reveals God's love for men (18.64-65) as the prefiguration of Christ in whom God's love for men is made manifest. We may say therefore that the idea of God in Hinduism has passed through various stages and has reached a personal God with whom man can commune in love. But we should keep in mind that the past is not something that is superseded once and for all: it is still there. And that is a very special trait of Hinduism: new intuitions are added to the old and both remain together, for the impersonal Brahman is as real as the personal Krishna.

II. THE IDEA OF SALVATION

Even the idea of salvation has undergone development in Hinduism in the course of centuries. Salvation, Zaehner observes, is perhaps a misleading word to use in connection with Hinduism

since it has a christian ring; but the word *moksha* can be translated by 'salvation', provided we know in what sense it is used. Speaking in general he says that in Hinduism it does not mean primarily salvation from sin but rather liberation from the human condition itself in so far as it is limited by space and time.⁵³

Before the appearance of the doctrine of transmigration accepted unquestioningly by all schools of Hinduism, salvation consisted in the souls being transferred to a heavenly abode of bliss. But once the idea of transmigration took hold of the Indian mind, the whole idea changed, for belief in endless rebirths and re-deaths daunted the early sages and the Buddha, and they devoted all their attention to finding a way out of the endless cycle of births and re-births.

1. *Man and Salvation*

Belief in transmigration called for a philosophical justification which perhaps gave rise to the idea of man we find in Hinduism, in which religion is never divorced from philosophy: "religion means primarily the realization of immortality while philosophy is only the rationalization of this felt immortality of the human soul and its relationship to the totality of existence".⁵⁴ According to the Upanishads, man is a composite being: composed of something that lives on and has re-births and something that he casts off at death. So we have an eternal, immortal, uncreated spirit, soul, self; and a changing, perishable but equally eternal and uncreated matter—the body. This view of man is based on the *Sāṃkhya* system which describes reality not as one but as two. On the one hand we have Nature, the space-time, changing, endless and eternal reality, and on the other, an infinite number of souls existing in isolation—outside space and time. At some stage the souls got imprisoned in matter—in Nature, that is, and the result is man. Neither man's intellect nor his ego has an essential relation to the eternal soul. The ego is mortal like the body but man mistakes it for the soul; ignorance is mistaking the ego for the soul-self, and so long as this ignorance remains, the soul remains imprisoned. Knowledge is the experiencing of the essential unconnectedness of the soul with the ego and the body, and for the soul to experience its true eternal nature. According to the *Sāṃkhya*, release is this experience of the 'natural' state of the soul, experience of the soul's eternity. This state is not a reconciliation or union with God, for the *Sāṃkhya* system does not

accept such a being, but it is the liberation of the soul from all bonds to matter so that it passes into an absolute form of existence, simple and beyond space and time. It ought to be remarked in passing that one of the greatest religious achievements of India is to have discovered the splendour, worth and timelessness of this "fragment of God", the human soul.

Thus the hindus, without knowing anything about the Fall which brought about disunity in man and disunity among men, and between man and God, finds man in an unnatural situation: two things cohabit in one vessel: the perishable dependent body and an immortal soul which when freed from the prison of the body is sufficient unto itself. In principle they diagnosed the malady correctly, but perhaps erred in thinking that man is *by nature* a duality, and that there can be no bridging the gap between spirit and matter. They tried the solution of severing the connection entirely and thus liberating the soul. All the Indian systems agree that man is in essence a pure spirit. In the upanishadic period we can find three different ways of considering man's attempts to liberate his soul: one, that of the *Sāmkhya-Yoga*, is that salvation consists in isolating the soul from the earthly body; there is no need for a God. In the Yoga, *Isvara* is no more than an exemplar—the only soul which is eternally undefiled constituting the model which all entangled souls must strive to imitate.⁵⁵ The second speaks of a "*felt* identification of the experiencing subject and the experienced objective world"; a pan-en-henic experience, a sense of being lost, of becoming one with the whole of nature. According to the third, when the soul has realised itself in isolation, in its basic unity, it considers all else as unreal and itself as identical with the Absolute—the only one Reality.⁵⁶ Naturally this search for the eternal in man through different ways brings us to the field of mysticism, for Hinduism is mystical through and through, and the results of these three tendencies can be classed as different types of mystical experience.

2. *Varieties of Mystical Experience*

The field of mysticism has been a subject of special interest to Zaehner since his appointment as Spalding Professor. We cannot enter into an exhaustive analysis of his position with regard to mysticism which, besides, would not be to our purpose,

but we shall merely take from him what bears on our present theme, the idea of salvation and its achievement.

As we noted in the introduction, mysticism, according to Zaehner, is the only way to enter into dialogue with the mystical Hinduism. It is very providential, he observes, that at a time when the Western mystical tradition seems to be dying out, the Eastern mystical traditions should have been discovered.⁵⁷ There is a general tendency which holds, in the words of Professor Arberry, that "mysticism is essentially one and the same whatever may be the religion professed by the individual mystic: a constant and unwavering phenomenon of the universal longing of the human spirit for personal communion with God"⁵⁸—an assertion which Zaehner has always been at pains to disprove.

By mysticism in general Zaehner understands, "the realization of a union or unity with or in something that is enormously, if not infinitely, greater than the empirical self".⁵⁹ This is purposely a broad definition which can include all types of 'mystical' experiences. According to him there are three types of mysticism. The first is what he calls *nature mysticism*, an experience of the transcending of space and time and the consequent sensing of the cessation of all subject object distinction. The human self seems to encompass All Nature and the subjective 'I' is merged into the Cosmic All, "individuality itself seems to dissolve and fade away",⁶⁰ and this brings peace and joy. Zaehner classes under this category the experience of Huxley under mescaline, of William James, Tennyson, Proust, Rimbaud and John Custace. In Hinduism this type of mysticism is envisaged, among other books, in *Kausitaki Upanishad* (1.6): "I am a season, the son of seasons, arisen from the womb of space, seed of brilliance, glory of the year, the Self of every single being. Thou art the Self of every single being. What thou art, that am I". This feeling of 'I am the Cosmos', 'I am the All' is a common concept in the Upanishads. The experience of all as one and one as all may be called 'pan-en-hen-ism' 'all-in-one-ism', rather than 'pantheism'.⁶¹

The second type is what Zaehner calls the *mysticism of isolation*, an experience of absolute oneness.⁶² This is not an experience of the oneness with all or part of the phenomenal world, but of the oneness of the individual soul with the Absolute, beyond which, from the soul's standpoint, there is noth-

ing else. This experience which the classical *Sāmkhya-Yoga* calls "isolation" is interpreted diversely, either in strictly monistic terms, where the individual soul stripped of all its attributes is identical with the Absolute, or as an experience of the self in its deepest essence—as the very ground of being. The soul which realises itself as the Absolute must also experience the phenomenal world as non-existent. This experience of absolute oneness is described in *Māndukya Up.* 7 and also *Brhadāraṇyaka Up.* 4.4, 19-20.

The experience of absolute oneness, which Zaehner also calls "mysticism of the soul" is according to him the experience of the deepest ground of one's own soul or, to use the words of Martin Buber, the experience of "original pre-biographical unity".⁶³ Monism mistakes the human soul for the Godhead, and, because of the unity it has discovered in itself, refuses to accept any diversity and relationship in the eternal time-less world. Theoretically at least, monism could be considered a perversion of the natural hankering after unity and harmony that is present in all men: "It is mysticism's dead end and rooted in original sin".⁶⁴ When the non-dualist claims to experience himself as the sole existent, One without a second, what he is referring to is an experience of absolute oneness from which all multiplicity is excluded. Since you experience absolute oneness, and since you are not conscious that you have ceased to exist, argues Zaehner, you are experiencing nothing but your own self at its deepest level. He quotes quite often the unforgettable experience of Martin Buber to show the error a person is bound to make when he undergoes such an experience.

However, this experience of the ground of the self is not without a positive value. Zaehner affirms that the "cultivation of the eternal self" is not merely "not sinful", but can be quite useful.

For by discovering the image of God within him, a man may be spurred on to seek God himself, or...God himself may intervene and smash the vessel of self-contemplation that the eye may be opened to God. The danger of this method, however, is that the mystic may stop half way, mistaking his own soul for the living God...Mistaking their own souls for God, these men...risk being utterly undone by spiritual pride: there will be no goodness in them.⁶⁵

The danger Zaehner warns against is real, but we also know

that at least some of the men who follow this advaita path are good. That would imply, according to what he himself says, that these men are not moved by pride but have been blessed by God. We may conclude that such an experience *need not* stop at the self, though there is danger that it will. To say therefore that the efforts of the men who follow this path are rooted in original sin is not altogether accurate.

3. *Mysticism of love*

The third type is that of a loving personal encounter of the transcendent God with the soul. God takes the initiative and loves the soul, by which is meant not the empirical self, but the true, hidden self which, according to Thomas Merton, is not discovered by many.⁶⁶

Since the perspective of Zaehner is theistic, we shall now consider more attentively the mysticism of love, towards which the whole of Hinduism and hindu search of the self and of God tend. The relationship to which God calls a soul purified of all its egoism and sin, is a relation of intimate love—of union. The creature abandons itself fully to the will of the Creator and feels itself so much one with the divine that it may even express this union in monistic terms though a fully transformed christian mystic knows his infinite distance and great sinfulness. Such mysticism of love in Hinduism is not, as Sankara has it, a lower and less sure way of liberation. It is the highest limit beyond all isolation and purification, which it presupposes.⁶⁷ In the Gita and among the Upanishads in the *Svetāsvatara* this type of mysticism is realised.

As is well known, all mystic paths demand a 'death' to self, to all the empirical self, to all that is not the real self—a total denudation. All the steps of Yoga aim at that. The Gita accepts the necessity of total personal denudation, of such an "integration of personality", which leads to the freedom of the spirit, to the state of Brahman. "Becoming Brahman" means that the liberated man sees no distinction between subject and object, between the "within" and the "without", and sees all things in himself (Gita, 4.35; 6.26). He has passed into the world of transcendent wisdom (*Jñāna*). When the soul thus discovers its true nature, "never is it born nor dies; never did it come to be, nor will it ever come to be again: unborn, eternal, everlasting

is this (self)—primeval" (2.20). It is omnipresent and beyond space, it is Brahman (5.24). So the liberated man becomes in a sense God, as he shares in God's mode of being (4.10), yet he is only a "minute part of God" (15.7). The idea of "becoming Brahman" is best expressed in 6.18f: one becomes "integrated" when he is totally free of all desires, with full mastery of his thought, he is indifferent to everything, swayed by no passion whatever: "all passion laid to rest, free from (all) stain, Brahman he becomes"... he sees all beings in the Self and the Self in all beings (*Isā Up.* 6), the same in everything he sees (6.29), but thanks to this integration and omnipresence he thinks he has reached the highest "prize beyond all others" (6.22).

Only after reaching this state of integration does he enter into communion with Krishna, the personal God. Here there is no question of an identity with Krishna, but there is participation in his being, for Krishna says: "who standing firm on unity communes-in-love with Me as abiding in all beings, in whatever state he be, that athlete of the Spirit abides in Me" (6.31). Here the love both of Krishna and of the bhakta remains, as is clear from the last chapter of the Gita. "This means that in eternity personal relationships at least as between the soul and God remain, though transformed on to a higher plane".⁶⁸ This higher bhakti, however, is fully savoured only by the totally integrated, liberated soul. Thus the Gita here opens new vistas: the achievement of liberation through detachment is only a way to "attach yourself to Me", to love God and thus achieve union with God. That is the message of the Gita, the most secret, the highest, "I love you well. Therefore will I tell you your salvation. Bear Me in mind, love Me and worship me...: so will you come to Me, I promise you truly, for you are dear to Me" (18.65).

Krishna, therefore, teaches that it is not wisdom that saves but trust in a god who grants the true knowledge of the true nature of things which is necessary for salvation (17.12-15). According to Zaehner, the whole teaching of the Gita is summed up in the last chapter: first, man must do the duties of the state in which God has placed him (18.45-8). Then he must work without desire for fruit, detached, disinterested (18.49), and thirdly, "become Brahman" integrated in self (18.51-3). Then finally he can enter God: "he gains the highest love and loyalty to Me" *madbhaktim labhate parām* (18.54). Thus we

may say that the Gita fulfils the Upanishads and all that went before, that it does not reject any of the older teaching but integrates them all and adds a new teaching of love.

4. *Solitary and other-worldly*

In India's search for salvation, we may discern two characteristic elements: first a separation is implied, a breaking off with matter since the aim of salvation is the realisation of the eternal essence of the soul, by a complete withdrawal from all that binds the soul to matter.⁶⁹ Thus Hinduism, at least in its classical formulation, is other-worldly, bent entirely on drawing man ever deeper into himself, into that "Kingdom of God that is within you"; in other words, aiming to cut the self off from matter and from others. The second characteristic is that the religious community, in spite of the close-knit caste system, does not play any important role in the search for salvation. These two elements, despising of matter or flight from it and disregard for the community and the other person, also mark its incompleteness. We need not enlarge here on the fact that man's social nature and his transcendental opening to the Other and to the others calls for a communitarian salvation without however neglecting the personal, individual element. Moreover no religion which claims to seek for purely individual salvation and which neglects matter and the material world can claim the allegiance of the men of today. Hence according to the assumption of Zaehner these two elements in Hinduism find their fulfilment in Christianity, namely in accepting the meaning and value of matter and the element of communitarian salvation. But here too it is the Gita which is the connecting link between the mysticism of isolation and that of union: in it there is detachment from the sense world, perfect peace in the depths of one's soul, attachment to God, and lasting and loving communion with God into whom one enters. So, in part at least, the incompleteness of the classical system is remedied: it is no more pure solitariness; but communion at least with God. Communion with others and seeing the value of matter and body become possible only when God "becomes matter" and our brother.

Briefly, hindus sensing the 'broken' situation of man where he was not one but two in one vessel, sought a remedy by dividing him rather than integrating him into a human person. They taught that he should liberate himself from all that was not the

eternal, immortal soul and from all men. The tendency however to find salvation in isolation is reversed by the Gita, where isolation and integration of personality are seen not as the end but as a means to a union with a personal God in love. But Zaehner remarks that the Gita is not a mystical treatise like that of a St John of the Cross, for it does not treat of the *experience of the soul with God*, but only of its *possibility*. "The Gita offers the promise, not yet the fulfilment".⁷⁰ Besides, even in the Gita way, the community is of no importance. In the following section we shall see how this hope of Hinduism is fulfilled in Christ.

III. CHRIST, THE FULFILMENT OF THE RELIGIOUS QUEST

One of the underlying principles of Zaehner's thesis that Christ is the fulfilment is that any revelation which claims to be final and lays claims to universal acceptance must integrate within itself all that has gone before, all that has been 'revealed at sundry times and in diverse manners'.⁷¹ According to his theory of theistic development in Hinduism there is a progressive revelation which shows man first that there is one principle informing both the cosmos and the human soul; secondly, the "beauty, the worth, the timelessness" of the human soul, that "fragment of God" as the Gita calls it; and thirdly, superior to the impersonal Absolute, the revelation of a personal God who not only causes and directs all things but also becomes incarnate to protect the good and to destroy the wicked. The Gita recognises God as someone distinct from man and creation, who can be approached as a friend, and with whom union is at least possible. It also teaches that while radical renunciation is necessary for the realisation of the true spiritual nature of man, man's end is not merely isolation or disintegration but the realisation of his creaturely self in union with the Godhead.

Already before the birth of Christ India had been accustomed to the idea of divine avatars, to the idea of God coming down among men in different forms to protect the good and to punish the evil. It goes without saying that in Christ the great desire of the Gita is fulfilled for here we have a God with whom a relation of friendship is possible: "I have called you friends" (*Jn.* 15.15). Not only will the believer be a friend, but he can

become one with Him (*Jn.* 17.21). The fulfilment far exceeds expectation, because God comes to be a man—a man like us in all things except sin; in humiliation not in power or glory (*Phil.* 2). In the historical person of Jesus who is the manifestation of the absolutely transcendent and immanent God, the “Absolute becomes relative”, transcendence and immanence coincide. The transcendent is no more the far away, but becomes immanent in us as well through the sacraments and the life of grace.

Secondly, Hinduism had envisaged a God with whom man could live in union. But no communion is possible with a mythological god, for “wonderful though the myth of the incarnate Krishna is, it is still only a myth. though a myth full of meaning and a prefiguration of the historical Incarnation of the God who is at the same time love”.⁷² Christ, on the other hand, achieves this union between man and God first of all in His very person in a supreme way. The great desire of the Gita, namely, to “enter God” becomes a reality in Christ when God and man become one reality, without mingling and without separation. Krishna had revealed that God loves man. The love of God becomes ‘visible’ when God does become man out of love for man and shows the extent of this love. If Krishna said, “I love thee well” (*Gita.* 18.64-65), Christ said, “There is no greater love than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friend” (*Jn.* 15.13), and in history shed, even to the last drop, His blood for the beloved.

The union between man and God achieved in Christ is the pledge of our union with God. The way for us to achieve it is the way of Christ: death to self and to all that is not God—the long cherished ideal of Hinduism. Incidentally, Zaehner observes that the idea of self-denial, of death to self can be understood by the hindu and is a link between the two religions; Indian religions rigorously put it into practice to the confusion and discomfiture of christians. Through His Crucifixion Christ shows the type of mystical path the soul must tread if it is to rise to union with God. The Crucifixion of Christ is in Indian terminology not merely the total giving up of the ego, but even an abandon of the eternal essence, and the refusal to accept beatitude apart from God.⁷³ This needs some explanation.

Christian faith teaches us that the fall⁷⁴ brought about a two-fold separation: separation of man from God and a divi-

sion of man within himself. The dominion his spirit had over matter was no longer perfect, for the Fall set enmity between the body and the spirit. Hindus had instinctively felt that matter was in opposition to the spirit, but could not know that it was not evil by nature, much less that whatever evil was to be found in it was an effect of sin. St Paul had clearly experienced this "law of sin" (*Rom.* 7.12f) that fights against the law of reason in him. He saw too that to save him from this "body of death", a divine intervention was needed: in fact Christ supplied precisely that, first by achieving the unity in Himself between matter and spirit. By the Incarnation God redeemed matter and the material world from its isolation from the spirit, for in Christ there is no "separation", no sin, no "*Sonderung*", as Zaehner likes to repeat. He says that the German word *Sünde*, sin, is connected with *Sonderung*, separation. The First Adam, the "All-Man",⁷⁵ brought in disintegration and fissiparous tendencies in the universe; the Second Adam, by being without sin, without inner separation, was a unity in Himself: a unity of God and man, and man in the fullest sense, with body, mind and an immortal spirit. He was not only "integrated in himself", a *Jivanmukta*, a liberated one, but he was also the bond of union that was to draw all men together into His own body, which is the Church. This *Jivanmukta*, by becoming a "curse" as the representative of sinful man, undergoes all the purgation that man must undergo in order to be united to God; He atones also for the immortal self which when it "realises itself" thinks it has reached the end whereas it has to abandon even that in order to ascend to the Father. It is only by abandoning all—all that one considers as self, and as one's own—that he can enter into God, can rise "united with the Son of God into the full life of the Trinity—Father, Son and the Holy Ghost—Being, Thought and fruition of Love, the *sat, cit, ānanda* of the hindus, Three in One as the non-dualist vedanta itself confesses; for by knowing and rejoicing in Himself, the Eternal Being, though always One, is none the less Three".⁷⁶ Thus in the death and self-sacrifice of Christ the Indian ideal of self-denial finds its radical and perfect fulfilment.

1. *The Incarnation and matter*

The Incarnation is the "marriage" between matter and spirit, the irruption of the eternal into the temporal, the starting point of the sanctification of matter.⁷⁷ It brings the eternal to

the level of the temporal and the temporal to the level of the eternal. Matter was already sanctified by the presence of the Spirit of God at creation, but man had disrupted that inner unity, hence the further intervention at the Incarnation. Zaehner believes that "There is nothing so very wonderful about the redemption of the human soul and its reunion with the God from whom it sprang but from whom sin separated it; but there is something utterly mysterious about the redemption of the body",⁷⁸ for according to him it is the resurrection of the body that distinguishes Christianity from all other religions. This mystery fulfilled the hopes of Zoroastrianism which believed in a life after death of the whole person, and of Judaism which too had believed that life after death—if life there was—had to be of the whole person, and finally of Hinduism which believed in the immortality of the soul. Christianity, while holding the possibility of the existence of the soul independently of the body, believes in the resurrection of the whole person, body and soul, a fact already achieved in Christ and in His Mother. Thus through the incarnation and the resurrection of the body, matter is given a value which completes the one-sidedness of Hinduism.

2. *Solitary-Solidary salvation*

We have noted that the Indian religions are 'solitary' in the sense of the yogic 'isolation' and also because, according to all the systems and schools, salvation is liberation and a 'private' affair: the community has little place in the individual's search for liberation. The Gita had brought in a new element: "enter the Lord". The desire of "entering the Lord" can be realized fully only when one is baptized into the Body of the Lord, enter into a new life, become one with Him, by becoming a member of His living Body, the Church. The Church, therefore, stands midway between the quest for individual salvation, so typical of India, and collective and corporate harmony, so typical of China.⁷⁹ Since in her Founder takes place the "marriage" between spirit and matter, she will be able to reject the manichaeian tendency and, rejecting all private, solitary efforts at personal spiritualisation, she will be able to unify and attract to herself as centre and through herself to her Founder and Head, all the aspirations to unity and integration, to 'yoga', that are in every heart. In the material and sacramental structure of the Church is already

present in embryo the unity towards which mankind is converging. The very essence of the Church is unity through her One Head, one guiding inner Principle, and through obedience to the Pope, she is already the sacrament of unity.⁸⁰ For Christ came not so much to save individual souls, but to build up a new creation—His Body, the New Temple in which all would be living stones (1 *Pet.* 2.5-5). "His mission was not only to reunite man with God, but to heal the lesion between soul and body in individual men, and to build them into the integrated whole which is the Church".⁸¹ Following the theories of Teilhard, Zaehner holds the evolution of the whole world of matter and spirit towards the Omega Point. The Church here on earth is already a promise of that fuller unity yet to be achieved.

IV. SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

The basic presuppositions of Zaehner, we have seen, are that we should not water down the differences between religions, which despite differences converge on Christ and that the Church must learn from these religions. He holds, however, that in our approach to non-Christian religions it is not the differences that we should insist upon, but rather what is common to us, in a spirit of genuine charity which respecting differences tries to learn about the others "from within". When we study Hinduism from within, beginning with the sacred Scriptures and not with later theological or philosophical developments, we notice in it a development of ideas which points to Christ. The religions, therefore, different as they are, lead to Christ, the fulness of revelation, as the Second Vatican Council teaches (*Dei Verbum*, 7). We must learn from other religions, where, as the Council teaches, rays are present "of that Truth which enlightens all men" (*Nostra Aetate*, 2) and the Church cannot be indifferent to these rays. Zaehner rightly insists that it is genuine charity that will enable us to enter into contact with these religions, a charity which forces us to understand these other religions without glossing over the differences.

According to Zaehner mysticism is the privileged field of encounter with Hinduism. Of the three types of mysticism that he finds in Hinduism the mysticism of love is for him a meeting point between Hinduism and Christianity or at least the Catholic Church which holds mysticism in esteem. The mysticism of love towards which Hinduism tends is seen first of all

in the development of the idea of God: from a polytheism through diverse stages the God of Hinduism comes to be a personal, transcendent and immanent God who calls man to a relationship of communion with him. Secondly in the idea of salvation there is also a development: from the idea of isolating the eternal spirit in man, there grows a desire for communion with a personal God beyond the integration of self and "becoming brahman". After the revelation of the possibility of union with a personal God, says Zaehner, there is no more any need for isolation in one's own being. The mysticism of love finds its fullest expression and realisation in Christianity when the soul can really enter into a relation of communion with the God-Man. The personal transcendent-immanent God towards whom Hinduism tends, finds its true realisation in one who is truly God and truly man, Christ, who in and through His Body, the Church, incorporates and makes "enter" into Him all the believers, 'bhaktas' who abandon all their self-love and egoism for His love.

Zaehner rightly insists on the differences between Hinduism and Christianity. However the differences are not to be over-emphasised, especially because, at the level of the theism of the Gita, they are much less real than at the level of the advaita. When, however, he says that we should look for what is common to these religions and Christianity, he echoes the teaching of the Second Vatican Council which says: "She [the Church] gives primary consideration in this document to what human beings have in common, and what promotes the fellowship among them" (N.A. 1). Concerning his emphasis on mysticism, the following observation is in place: it is not so much having a mysticism of love in Hinduism and in Christianity that enables us to 'meet', but we must enter into these mystical experiences ourselves and understand what the hindu is talking about when he talks of his mystical experiences. Otherwise we shall be merely 'talking' about the 'inexpressible' at a purely conceptual level and shall not succeed in really 'encountering' the other person.

It seems to me that Zaehner's insistence that Hinduism is not concerned so much "with the existence of God or with any service we might owe him as with the practical ways and means of escaping from this eternal round of ever-recurring birth and death" is only partially true. It is true that Hinduism is very

much concerned with 'liberation' and unconcerned about 'proving' the existence of a God. Yet the whole of the hindu search is for the Absolute, Brahman, God. As Zaehner himself says: "What is Brahman? that is the question from which all the Upanishads start". Hence it is not quite accurate to say that Hinduism is concerned primarily with the liberation of the soul.

Now we shall examine the theological principles in Zaehner's idea of fulfilment.

The only revelation that could lay claim to universal acceptance and to be called fulfilling would have to be, says Zaehner, a revelation that confirmed all that had been revealed before 'at sundry times and in diverse manners' and which enabled these partial revelations to fall into their due place in God's revelation of Himself not only in Israel but also among all nations.⁸²

By revelation he understands "revelation by God of his own nature". Here he refers to the 'revelation' made by God in the Gita, for according to him, in the Gita, "God reveals something about Himself that could scarcely have been arrived at by mystical intuition alone".⁸³ The definition is too limited, but following the teaching of Dei Verbum (no.6) we may say that revelation is a free and gratuitous intervention of God in the history of men, progressively revealing Himself and His saving plan for man, through words and deeds, and finally through the Incarnation calling man to Him through Christ. We do not intend to 'prove' the existence of a revelation outside the judeo-christian economy, but shall merely point out the lines of a possible development.

Already in the early christian Apologists we can find the idea of the presence of the Logos from creation onwards, who taught people in various ways and who finally at the Incarnation taught the absolute truth.⁸⁴ Following the teaching of Romans 1.19 and other texts, christian theology has held in one way or other the existence of a 'natural' revelation which is distinct from a 'supernatural' revelation by which God gratuitously and freely reveals himself as One and Three, calling man to a dialogue. Father Latourelle says that creation manifests a God who is the cause of it, but He himself does not speak; but this approach is not followed by many. G. Thils proposes a universal and a particular revelation, and R. Schlette a general history of salvation and a special history of salvation. Whichever theory

one follows, one comes to the conclusion that there is some revelation outside the judeo-christian economy. The Second Vatican Council has also hinted at the presence of some action and manifestation of God when it says, that there are rays of Truth present in these religions. So we can state that the Gita contains some revelation in a strict sense of the word.

Now if there are revelations in the Gita, we must enquire about their relationship to the Gospel. Zaehner says that a revelation which is to have universal acceptance must *confirm* all preceding revelations and give them their proper place in the plan of God. We can attempt to use his criterion. We know that in the Old Testament there is a development in the idea of God: at first Yahweh is no more than the most important god among other gods; the second stage is that *for the Jews* there is no other God than Yahweh; thirdly there is *absolutely* no other God but Yahweh. In this way certain ideas about Yahweh are surpassed and transcended, and the 'newer' revelation 'corrects' the older. We can say that the revelation which claims universal acceptance must include all that is of value, whatever can be recognised as the work of God in other religions. And that is what the Council says: it rejects nothing that is true and beautiful in these religions (*Nostra Aetate*, 2). These earlier revelations can be said to be included in the christian revelation only in as much as they fall into their due place in the whole plan of God. The question of the fulfilment in the Church brings a whole gamut of problems: "Fulfilment-theory", "Sacramental-view" and the like. We shall say more of this later.

In conclusion we may say that the approach of Zaehner has definitely positive elements. In our previous chapters we noted that each of the authors had taken one or other aspect of Hinduism and approached it from one or other point of view. Zaehner's view-point was the one so far most neglected: namely, the aspect of Theism, bhakti and the Gita. Lacombe and Johannis do refer to these elements, but perhaps they do not give so much importance to them as Zaehner does. Just as Cuttat insists on the advaitic trend, Zaehner insists almost one-sidedly on the theistic trend⁸⁵ but none the less his approach is valuable, for there is no 'one and only' way of meeting Hinduism, and all the aspects have to be taken into account. Each person is attracted by one or other aspect. It is also true that in spite of the importance of the advaita philosophy today, hindus are often very theistic in their religious life even though if asked about

their belief they would most probably talk 'advaitin'. Hence, to understand the soul of India, a thorough understanding of the bhakti trend in Hinduism is essential and there lies the value of Zaehner's approach. One of his beautiful insights seems to provide a fitting conclusion to this chapter:

Man despite all his betrayals and his denials, cannot forever resist the attractive force of God. Impelled by the Holy Spirit from the beginning, saved from the egoism and selfishness...he has no alternative but to share in the building up of the "body" of the Holy Trinity itself in space and time, in the making manifest on earth that indissoluble Unity that subsists forever in eternity...Man, assumed like his mother Mary into the heart of divine life, will not thereby cease to be man, nor will 'each' be swallowed up in 'all' nor 'all' in God; for each will see himself only in the context of all, his individual will transformed at last into the will of God. Then, when the "All-Man" is once again made "one in thought, word and deed", we shall understand what is meant by the "Communion of Saints".⁸⁶

FOOT NOTES

Chapter IV

The following abbreviations are used in this chapter:

Hind. = *Hinduism*; CS = *The Convergent Spirit*; CD = *Concordant Discord*; CR = *The Comparison of Religions (At Sundry Times)*; CCWR = *The Catholic Church and World Religions*; HMM = *Hindu, Muslim, Mysticism*; BG,Z = *The Bhagavad Gita*, Translation by Zaehner; DCCM = *Dialectical Christianity and Christian Materialism*; MSP = *Mysticism Sacred and Profane*.

1. "Eccentric Extraordinary", in the *Tablet*, 14, Dec. 1974. 1213-14.
2. As his books are too many to be mentioned here, we refer the reader to the bibliography.
3. CD, 11.
4. CD, 9.
5. *ibid.*
6. Cf. CD, 10; *Hind*; CCWR, etc.
7. "I think that I am allergic to theology in general and to German theology in particular", CD, 11. Cf. further, CD, 15, 16, 17, 18, 280, 348; a series of articles entitled, *Theology, Drugs and Zen: the irrelevance of theology*, in *The Listener*, 5, 12, 19 November, 1970; DCCM, 33 etc.
8. Cf. CD, 30-31; 344, 346, 348 (following the views of Rousseau).
9. His opposition to Augustine can be shocking: Cf. CD, 22, 373-374, 375, DCCM, 66.
10. Cf. CR, 169f; CD, 6f. In CR Zaehner has in mind the book of Frithjof Schuon, *Transcendent Unity of Religions*.
11. CD, 6, Cf. also, 7.
12. CD, 439. On the level of the formulations the religions seem to differ much more radically than in fact they do.
13. CCWR, 17. Cf. CR, 15f; CCWR, 16; CD, 64. Zaehner, "Dogma" in *Hibbert Journal*, 53 (1955) 9-18.
14. Cf. CR, 25f.
15. Cf. CD, 21. Zaehner does not mince words in his condemnation of the Church, the 'whore of Babylon,' Cf. CD, 365f.
16. Cf. CS, 39-40,
17. CR, 166. Cf. CCWR, 8f; CR, 165f.
18. CD, 20. Cf. CCWR, 129, 147, 57.
19. Cf. CD, 19. Cf. 12.
20. CCWR, 8. Prof. Zaehner does not really mean that we should not point out the differences, for he himself does insist on the differences, but we should rather seek to understand the other religions from within.
21. Cf. *The Tablet*, 24 April, 1971, 409.
22. CCWR, 11.
23. CR, 173. see CR, 56-57.

24. *Hind.*, 7. See 19f for a brief exposition of the ideas about these gods.
25. *Hind.*, 39. M. Hiriyana in his *Outlines of Indian Philosophy*, London, 1932, calls this verse the beginning of "philosophical monotheism". However his meaning is not different from that of Zaehner: "... attempts were made to discover not one God above other gods, but rather the common power that works behind them all", 39.
26. *Hind.*, 41. To equate God the Father and the Spirit to *Prajapati* is to disregard the meaning of the terms in their context, and is questionable. *Rig Veda*, 10. 81, 82; *Hind.*, 40f; Zaehner, "Creation in the early Hindu Scriptures", in *Studia Missionalia*, XVIII (1969), 13-40, Cf. 17f.
27. *CD* 88; *Hind.*, 39: "...Upanishads which constitute the *Ved-ānta*... which despite their late date, are the real sacred book of classical Hinduism. They set the 'pantheistic' and 'monistic' tone that gives its distinctive flavour to Hinduism in all its phases..."
28. *Hind.*, 56.
29. *Hind.*, 73
30. Cf. *Hind.*, 23, 35; see *CS*, 98.
31. Cf. *CR*, 58-59. For the meaning of the word *brāhman* and the early beginnings of speculation into its nature, Cf. *Hind.*, 46f. see for this section *Hind.*, 51f; *CS*, 109; *CR*, 61.
32. *CS*, 109.
33. *CS*, 110.
34. *CR*, 107.
35. *CS*, 111. But in *Mundaka*, 1. 2. 13, the Brahman seems to be identical to the Person.
36. *CR*, 68.
37. *CR*, 66.
38. Cf. Zaehner, *Living Faiths*, Encyclopedia, Introd. p. 18: "At no stage does Indian religion have any clear conception of God as Lord and maker of all things out of nothing"; Cf. *CR*, 68-70; *HMM*, 81.
39. *CR*, 70. Since this transcendence is only relative Zaehner usually speaks of an "Eastern immanentism and Western Transcendentalism". Cf. *CD*, 150; *HMM*, 65.
40. *CR*, 119. see *BG,Z* 8-9, 2.
41. Cf. *CR*, 117; *CD*, 323.
42. Swami Chidbhavananda, *The Bhagavad Gita*, Sri Ramakrishna Publication Tapovanam, Tiruchirapalli, 1969, 3, see 41.
43. *CD*, 118.
44. *CR*, 125.
45. *CR*, 130; Cf. *CS*, 118. Krishna is a God of love: *CD*, 156, 148, 143; *Utopia and Beyond*, in *Eranos Jahrbuch*, 39 (1963), 281-309; 301. To prove that Krishna is Love itself, Zaehner had referred to Gita, 7.11 in his *Comparison of Religions*. But in his translation of the Gita, he has: "Power in the powerful am I (such power) as knows neither desire nor passion: desire

- am I in contingent being...". This seems to indicate some change in his opinion.
46. Cf. M. Dhavamony, *Love of God according to Saiva Siddhanta*, Oxford, 1971, 127f. translation, 128.
 47. *The Gita*, 9.30.31: *bhajate mam ananabhak*: 'worship me with exclusive devotion'. The *Gita*, by Shakuntala Rao Sastri. This is the translation by most of the authors.
 48. CD, 143.
 49. CD, 155.
 50. CD, 155-156. "We learn very little about Krishna the man in the *Gita*...", CD, 153.
 51. CR, 135. See 116-117.
 52. Cf. CS, 184; CR, 25; 188; CD, 439. Generally for Zaehner myth means a symbol of something that is thought to be eternal (cf. CD, 24), but when he talks of the 'myth of the agony of the Son of God' (CD, 117) you are not too sure what meaning he gives to that word.
 53. Cf. Zaehner, "Salvation in the Mahabharata" in *The Saviour God*, Manchester, 1963, 218ff. See for this section, *Atharva veda*, 4.34.5-6; *Hind.*, 57-58, 67f; CD, 66; CS, 35f; CR, 22f; "Nirvana.", 118f; "Utopia.", 292f; CD, 103.
 54. CR, 167.
 55. *Yoga Sutra*, 1.24-26.
 56. Cf. CR, 89; *Mandukya Up.* 5-6, see further, CR, 74, 175, *Hind.*, 71.
 57. CCWR, 130. See for this section, *Hindu and Muslim mysticism*, 1960. *Mysticism Sacred and Profane*, 1957, 1961, 1967. In almost all his books and articles, a large section is about mysticism.
 58. Arberry, *Sufism, An Account of the Mystics of Islam*, London, 1950, 11. Zaehner, CD, 194.
 59. CR, 171.
 60. Cf. CCWR, 21; CD, 59; 200-201; MSP, 106f. We can do no more than mention these types; only the third type can be dealt with in some detail, as that is the mysticism of the *Gita* which prefigures the christian mysticism of union in love.
 61. Cf. *Brh. Up.* 1.4.10; *Chand. UP.* 8.1, 1-3; *Gita*, 2, 12-21; Zaehner, CD, 200f; MSP, 28.
 62. CD, 202f; CCWR, 21.
 63. Zaehner refers to Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, London, 1947, 24-25. Cf. CR, 91-92; CS, 127.
 64. CS, 129. Zaehner, *Can Mysticism be Christian?*, 31.
 65. CS, 128. Cf. the need for distinguishing between what people *say* and what they *are* and *do*. Cf. Cuttat, Introduction to *Inde, Islam, Israël*, 42, who affirms the possibility of the opening of the *enstasis* to an *ekstasis*; and the opinion of Lacombe referred to earlier.
 66. Merton, *New Seeds of Contemplation*, 5-6; CCWR, 19, 131f.
 67. Cf. HMM, 15.
 68. CD, 205.

69. See for this section, CR, 168f; CS, 35f.
70. CR, 179.
71. This principle would be discussed later. For this paragraph, Cf. CS, 203, CR, 183f.
72. CR, 188.
73. Cf. CS, 198; CR, 191f; CR, 24.
74. Here we do not enter into a discussion about the meaning of the Fall as Zaehner understands it. In general he follows an evolutionary theory according to which the Fall is nothing but a 'leap' into consciousness; accordingly he misinterprets the ancient liturgical formula, '*Felix Culpa*' by saying that it is 'felix' because it brought individual consciousness. Cf. CD, 224f; 326f; DCCM, 14f; CS, 44f, 68f; CR, 177f.
75. Following Juliana of Norwich, Zaehner calls Adam, "the All-Man".
76. CR, 193.
77. Cf. CD, 423, 358, 360; DCCM, 89, 98.
78. CR, 189-190. As this is a personal theological view of Zaehner, we do not discuss this point here.
79. Cf. CCWR, 148; CS, 207f.
80. Cf. CS, 22.
81. CS, 194.
82. CR, 183.
83. CD, 131. Cf. HMM, 55.

We cannot enter into the vast question of the meaning of non-christian religions or their relation to christianity. We shall merely suggest a few books that could help the treatment of such a question. Cf. René Latourelle, S.J., *Théologie de la révélation*, 1963; G. Thils, *Propos et problèmes de la théologie des religions non-chrétiennes*, Casterman, 1966; H.R. Schlette, *Towards a theology of Religions*, London, 1966; H. Nys, *Le Salut sans l'Evangile*, Cerf, 1966; R. Girault, *Evangile et religions aujourd'hui*, 1969; K. Kunnumpuram, *Ways of Salvation*, Poona, 1971. The question of Revelation in the Religions of the World is thoroughly studied in *Revelation, Studia Missionalia*, 20 (1971).

84. Cf. Justin, *Apologia*, I, 46; II, 8 etc.
85. D.S. Sarma rightly complains that "Zaehner does not think much of advaita philosophy which most hindus regard as the pinnacle of Indian thought", *Renascent Hinduism*, Bombay, 1966, p. 79.
86. CS, 210.

CHAPTER V

INDIA, "LAND OF THE TRINITY" (ABBE JULES MONCHANIN)

Introduction

We shall conclude the survey of pioneers of hindu-christian meeting by presenting Jules Monchanin who was a pioneer in adapting monastic life to the traditions of hindu sannyasa and thus initiated a dialogue with Hinduism at a depth hitherto not attempted.

A great missionary of our times and a "seeker of the Absolute",¹ Jules Monchanin was a man of charity, like a "revelation of the charity of God."² The numerous testimonies and reminiscences published at his death³ bear ample witness to the love and appreciation people had for him, especially in Europe. A few of the traits that stand out in all the testimonies are that he was an adorer of and witness to the Trinitarian mystery, that he was an exceptional personality not only because of his natural qualities like a brilliant intellect,⁴ humility, universal culture and constant readiness to serve, but primarily because he was a man of God.⁵ Some even consider him the greatest of the French clergy since the time of the first world war.

Jules Monchanin was born in 1895 at Fleurie near Lyons in France. After his ordination in 1922 his field of apostolate was parishes and schools. Science, painting, literature, music—everything interested him, yet philosophy was his special interest. A contemplative by nature, he had felt from his early days a call to go to India to be an adorer of the Blessed Trinity, for he believed that India was the *land of the Trinity*.⁶ He made a vow to devote himself fully to the salvation of India, and thenceforward his love and knowledge of India and her religions grew ever richer and his longing to be fully an Indian became ever more intense.⁷ His desire was partially fulfilled when in 1939 he was received into the Diocese of Tiruchirapally by Bishop J. Mendonça. His primary aim in coming to India, he wrote to his mother, was to begin here a purely contemplative Ashram which would follow the old christian traditions of contemplative life and at the same time be truly Indian.⁸ This dream materialised in 1950 when he

was joined by Dom Le Saux from France and both together founded an Ashram dedicated to the Trinity—*Saccidānanda*, near Kulitalai on the bank of the Kavery. They called this solitude *Shantivanam*, the wood of peace. Abbé Monchanin assumed a new name, *Parama-Arubi-Ānandam*, which itself bore witness to his special devotion to the Supreme (*parama*) Formless (*arubi*), Bliss (*ānandam*), the Holy Spirit. His already weak health was wrecked by his austere life and he was forced to return to Paris where he died on 10 October, 1957.⁹

I. CHRISTIANISATION OF INDIA

The very rich and penetrating thought of Monchanin does not easily lend itself to systematisation and to summarising.¹⁰ However, we propose to treat it in the following manner: the point of view of his approach to Hinduism is the total christianisation of India, the conversion of India in its totality. After considering the various problems that face such an evangelisation or christianisation, we shall discuss the method of approach he proposes, namely, the practice of monastic contemplative life centred on the Most Holy Trinity, the mystery which is the fulfilment of all the aspirations of Hinduism. Monastic life expresses best India's quest for the Absolute, her religious soul. Hence Monchanin regards the meeting with India at that level as desirable for the Church and for India, whose aspirations for the One without a second would find their fulfilment in the Trinity. Of the three Persons of the Trinity, it is the Holy Spirit, the "formless person" that India "awaits" with special eagerness. Hence the prominent role of the Spirit in the approach of Monchanin.

1. *Christianisation-Conversion*

The implantation of the Church in non-European countries occupied the thought and the prayers of Monchanin for years. He greatly desired the conversion of India. "My only desire", he wrote, "is that India be one day fully christian; not to desire it would be unchristian".¹¹ Time and again he insists on the need of the Church to work for the conversion of Hinduism and he dreams of hindu Temples as places dedicated to the worship of the Trinity.¹² His approach, then, is not that of dia-

logue in the restricted sense of the word. Conversion for him, however, is not proselytism, for each conscience and the secret action of the Spirit in each person must be infinitely respected. Besides he says it is not the missionary who converts but the Spirit of Christ. What he envisages is the process of saturating oneself with India and Christianity in order to rethink Christianity in India and India in Christianity. For conversion is a process of maturation from within, not only of a person but of a whole civilisation.

The aim of the mission of the Church is oriented towards the salvation of men, the implantation of the Church and the growth of the Risen Christ in his mystical Body, the Church.¹³ In the first place the aim of the mission is the salvation of man—the whole of man has to be evangelised and “converted”, not merely his soul. It is the whole person that Christianity has to assume, “inform” and transform. Not only does no human being but also no human value of any person escape the sphere of the Gospel, of the transforming plan of God. Missionary activity is meant, secondly, for the implantation of the Church because salvation of an individual cannot be envisaged outside of a community; and the Church as the community of salvation integrates the human community into herself. For just as there is no soul without a body,¹⁴ so too no individual exists independently of society, for he cannot realise himself except in and through a community, in communication with men. Man realises himself in an eternal tension between himself and other persons, and is essentially a member of society. A society includes economic, social, political and even geographic elements in its formation and becomes a civilisation by an exchange of values. As basic values Monchanin considers action, art, thought (scientific, historic and philosophical), love, and finally religion, the highest and most basic of all. The Church cannot allow any value to remain outside her embrace. She has to assume, purify and transform them all. The Spirit of Christ, the animating principle of the Church, dwells in every person and the Church cannot afford to be absent where her animating Spirit and the risen Lord are present either as received or as awaiting reception. She has to manifest Him whose body she is hence the mission is the epiphany of the Church and of the Lord. It is in this “interval” between “invisible presence” and “visible presence” of the Church that the question of the salvation of non-Christians is situated. But the Church is really born in a place not just

when there is an autochthonous body of laity, clergy and bishops closely bound together in an organic form, but when, besides, the forms of art and thought are no longer borrowed from other cultures and civilisations but are truly indigenous. According to Monchanin, a necessary sign of the full establishment of the Church in any place is the existence of contemplative life in organised form, in monasteries dedicated to contemplation.¹⁵ We shall however be dealing with this question at some length later. Finally the third aim of the mission is the growth of the Risen Lord in his Body, the intergration into Him and hence the perfection of the whole mankind and of every man. These three aims are mutually dependent and cannot be separated. We shall now consider a little further how these aims of assimilation, purification and transformation of a civilisation are to be fulfilled.

2. *Assimilation, Purification and Transformation.*

Just as Christ assumed a human nature so that human beings might become "sharers of the divine nature" (2 Pet 1, 4), so the missionary must make his own the values of "his" people, i.e. of the civilisation to which he is sent, and he must do this so totally and basically that he puts himself in the place of the other and becomes the other. The missionary thus configures himself to the first moment of salvation: the Incarnation. "Adaptation" therefore is no trick, but a consequence of the very exigency of charity which must incarnate itself. In order that this assimilation be real, one must start from within—*ab intus ad extra*—beginning with the more spiritual values and move downwards and outwards to the more sensible and concrete expressions and thus accept the type of life of one's people.¹⁶

The "second moment" of salvation is purification and death. As sin has had its reign in all cultures, all socio-cultural values are to be purified of their errors and deviations. First of all the missionary, by participating most profoundly in the sorrows of the people who have become his own, and by making reparation for their sins, brings the civilisation of his adoption to the second moment of salvation: death. Finally there is a third moment, glorification or transformation, producing a truly christian humanism, a "converted humanism" which has passed through the death of the Cross, and then tends towards its final glorification at the Parousia. As religion is the central pole of a civilisation, it is primarily the religious aspirations that have to be assumed, purified and transfigured.

3. *Discovering the Dynamism*

The question of what precisely is to be assimilated is developed by Monchanin in *Église et la Pensée Indienne*, and in a few pages of *Écrits spirituels: Christianisation des cultures orientales*. His basic idea is that the essential dynamism of each religion and civilisation must be isolated by being stripped of all accidentals and extraneous accretions. Christianity, for example, has to be dissociated from all the conceptual patterns into which it has been incorporated during the centuries of graeco-roman civilisation. The same must be done with India and Hinduism. And then a rethought Christianity must be reinserted in its purity into a purified hindu civilisation. However this proposal has its difficulties. The original élan of hindu thought and Indian civilisation is difficult to find. Chronologies are lacking, stages of development hard to discern. Moreover their origins, dravidian and aryan, are obscure. We cannot obviously enter into this topic here, but it is good to mention that Monchanin shows the differences in the thought pattern and approaches to Reality in the two great groups aryan and dravidian and that a thorough grasp of the two is of much help for an understanding of hindu civilisation. In spite of all the difficulties that beset such an inquiry into the original spirit and dynamism, Monchanin arrives at the conclusion that underlying all the movements in Hinduism there is a thirst for God, a profound desire to know Him and to be united with Him. This is the hidden gem that has to be extracted from the smothering rubble.¹⁷

It may be objected that a like quest for the original élan of Christianity results only in depriving ourselves of all its development and of the riches consequent upon it. But Monchanin does not envisage a radical break with all tradition,¹⁸ though he politely reminds us that perhaps most of the later developments of Christianity are analytical rather than creative. No Summa or dogmatic formulation has either surpassed or reached the theology of Saints Paul and John. The analysis of different civilisations shows that there are in them moments of creative activity, which reveal the structure and rhythm of each civilisation, its fundamental thought categories and its relationship to other civilisations. Once this basic dynamism has been discovered in Christianity and Hinduism, one can be grafted on to the other. Two fundamental ideas that need to be rethought in Christianity are creation and person; in Hinduism the meaning of advaita

needs a process of purification to enter into the glorifying death of the Cross.

4. *India has not yet met Christ: Obstacles to Conversion*

Taking conversion in the wider sense, Monchanin insists that India has not yet met Christ.¹⁹ She has gratefully observed and appreciated the good educational, social and other activities of the Church but all that has not enabled the Church to meet India. The message of Christ has not become meaningful to the spiritually rich India, although there are some exceptions. To those who have learnt either from their gurus or through personal experience that God is a spirit and can be reached only by way of the spirit,²⁰ the social work of the Church has no spiritual value. The children of India who have become members of the Church are mostly those who have been untouched by her spiritual and mystical riches. The basic reason for this "failure" of the Church in India is that neither India nor Christianity have met the other as it really is. There persists a "mutual misunderstanding" of the other's essential nature. However some ground should be cleared before we enlarge on this basic problem.

In various articles Monchanin has studied the reasons for the delay in, or absence of, conversion.²¹ Besides the changing social and political structures which affect the work of the missionary, there are also genuinely religious elements which increase the difficulty of his work. The hold of Hinduism on the people is great: the strength of inherited traditions and pride in one's spiritual and philosophical riches, whether one has oneself read the *sāstras* and experienced their contents or not, make for a man who is proud of his religion. A foreigner is baffled by his characteristic thought-patterns, as for instance his ideas of history, time and logic. Conflicting schools of philosophy abound. Experience is emphasised as the final criterion of truth and there seems to be no appreciation of the notion of "personality" except in the bhakti trend of Hinduism. God is in Himself *nirguna* (without attributes); Isvara, the personal God, the God with attributes, is God as related to us. Consequently, the hindu is unable to believe in an ultimate personal existence. A further obstacle is the belief in the equality of all religions, though for many it means the superiority of Hinduism.²² There is however one reason which Monchanin considers very important: perhaps India is too rich.

Unlike Greece where there was a rather man-centred mythology which needed to be turned towards a divine revelation, India claims to be in possession of a revelation to which she has remained faithful all through the centuries—a revelation which proclaims the primacy of the Spirit, and consequently a thirst and search for God, the Absolute beyond forms and expressions. She has not seen the Church as a spiritual teacher, with a spiritual outlook to match her own, but mainly as a remnant of colonialism, something imported having no meaning for her. India will not turn to the Church unless the Church becomes a spiritual guru. That is why India's own deep religiosity may become an obstacle, and why Monchanin insists that the Church must become a witness to the spiritual. Only sanctity will convert India, for sanctity alone is the Church's answer to the aspirations of India. Only a guru who has spiritual experience of Christ can speak of Him to the hindu. Finally, Monchanin insists that a life of witness²³ to the transcendence of God and a life of charity can help to bring India to Christ.

To summarise: Monchanin considers the conversion of India as the mission of the Church; conversion is to be understood as a christianisation of the whole of man in his civilisation, a long process to be achieved through assimilation (after discovering the essence and dynamic élan of a civilisation and religion), purification and transfiguration of all the essential values of a civilisation. If until now India has not met Christ it is because the Church has perhaps not gone through this hard process, and she has not manifested her true visage. Only sanctity of life, witnessing to the spiritual and transcendent and genuine charity will enable India and Christianity to meet and recognise each other. Monchanin considers contemplation and its structured form, monasticism, as one of the most important means for achieving this slow assimilation of the riches of India, for reaching this sanctity of life and witnessing to the priority of the spiritual and the transcendent. He does not rule out the importance of other approaches, but proposes this as one of the ways. We shall now consider the importance and place of monastic life for the encounter of India and Christ.

II. MONASTICISM AND ENCOUNTER

There are a few basic convictions which led Monchanin to assert almost without qualification that the most suitable ground for a fruitful encounter between India and Christ is monastic life dedicated to the contemplation of the Trinity; for to him such a life expresses both the reality of the Church and the spiritual quest of India. The convictions are: the Church is primarily contemplative; each nation and people has a specific role and its own special contribution to make for the growth of the Universal Church. India's role and contribution would be contemplation and monastic life.

1. *The Church is Essentially Contemplative*

"The first aim—and duty—of the Church is adoration, an act which is but an anticipation foretaste and rehearsal of eternal life in the bosom of the Holy Trinity."⁴² This is how Monchanin views the function of the Church and the nature of contemplation. God in His infinite love has created the world as a reflection of His own glory. Intelligent creatures are not merely to be reflection, manifestation, "theophany" of God's glory, but sharers in His own nature and His glory. Man receives his very existence from the absolutely Existent, and has to point to God as his source and as his end. His glory lies precisely in being God's image and likeness, in receiving himself from God ever more fully, and in loving him.

The contemplative is given the grace to share consciously in the inner life of the Trinity itself. Christian revelation concerning God and man, and their relationship is a guarantee of this sharing. The transcendence-immanence of a strictly monotheistic God harmonises with the revelation of the doctrine of creation out of nothing, which affirms the essential difference between the finite and the infinite. While God is uniquely the "Other" and transcendent, He is also, through his presence in us, immanent. The soul has to acknowledge its nothingness before God and expect all from Him. Hence its primary aim is to know or love not itself but Him. Or to know itself only in order to know and love Him better, and finally attain Him in the ineffable communion of love. Contemplation as an anticipation of eternal life is the primary duty of man.²⁵

It is not only individuals but society as a whole that has to turn to God in adoration. The Church is the spiritual society essentially set apart for the fulfilment of this duty. As the sacrament of the God-Man she shares in his essential holiness and in his function as adorer of the Father. Hence the Church is essentially holy and the manifestation of the holiness of God. As members of a "holy Church" all christians must realise what they are in essence: sharers of the holiness of God and adorers called to intimate union with Him. Each member has an irreplaceable function of reflecting the uncreated sanctity of God. But it is always in her name that contemplatives, those set apart for the service of praise and adoration, fulfil this function of the Church. From the beginning of her existence she has recognised this essential function and nature and has allowed and encouraged men and women to live either as hermits or in groups dedicated to the worship and search of the all-holy God, to seek the knowledge of the unknowable.²⁶

2. *Each Nation has its Providential Place in the Plan of God*

We saw earlier that the Mission of the Church is oriented not merely to the salvation of individuals but to the christianisation of every civilisation. The Church as the Body of the Risen Lord will be decked with variety for she is neither Latin, nor Greek nor a stranger to anyone, but universal and open to all.²⁷ She believes that in the plan of the Father who has prepared each people and nation differently for the reception of his Son, each has a special function, because each has been given special gifts. For the supernatural life of grace is built on the natural life of man in his totality. Only by deeply penetrating into the predispositions of peoples and races will the Church awaken in them and bring to fulfilment the seeds of the Word sown in them by the Creator. Just as "star differs from star in brightness" (I Cor. 15 41), so each person and nation is different, and the individual contributions to the Church, the "coat of many colours", will be different—hence the necessity of radically studying a culture from its very sources. Some people receive faith and culture from the Church, but others like Indians are already admirably developed culturally, and the Son is yet to come to collect the harvest of the Spirit and build up the "theandric pleroma". Just as the Old Testament and the mediterranean civilisations were a preparation for the coming of the Lord, so too is Indian civilisation. The "Lord of the Harvest" is yet to come.²⁸

3. *India has her providential Role and Mission in the Church*

Greece had a special role to play in the history of the Church in Europe. Similarly, we can expect a christianised India to play an important and significant role for the growth, not only of the Church in Asia but also of the universal Church. India is all the better suited to fulfil this function because she has been given something very exceptional by her creator: a sense of, and thirst for, the spiritual and immortal, for the eternal and the transcendent. "From the unreal, lead me to the Real, from darkness, lead me to the Light, from death, lead me to Immortality" has been her prayer from time immemorial. Thousands of her children have been seekers of the Absolute through various ways like the *karma-mārga*, the way of disinterested work *bhakti-mārga*, the way of loving devotion and *jñāna-mārga*, the way of intuitive, experiential realisation-knowledge. Monchanin describes all the three forms but usually develops the *jñāna-mārga*, "the one most removed, at least at first glance, from Christianity",²⁹ which is the way *par excellence* of the Upanishads, of the *Brahmasutras* of Badarayana, of Gaudapada and of Sankara. The search for the Absolute beyond name and form, for the *nirguna*, is rightly called apophatic. This unknowable one is not far from me: It is in my heart, in the "cave", *guhā*, of the heart:

Vast, heavenly, of unthinkable form.
And more subtle than the minute, It shines forth.
It is farther than the far, yet here near at hand.
Set down in the secret place (of the heart); *Mundaka Up.*
3.1,7)

Him who is hard to see, entered into the hidden,
Set in the secret place (of the heart) dwelling in the depth...
(*Katha Up.* 2,12)

India's providential role and mission however becomes clear in the following section.

4. *India and Monastic Life*

India, as we have said, dedicates herself to the search of this unknowable Absolute hidden in the heart. In Hinduism this search has been primarily the function of the *sannyasis* and *ashramites* who realise in themselves the God-ward movement characteristic of India,³⁰ and it was chiefly in her monks that her spiritual yearning found its best expression. According to

early traditions, when a man had fulfilled his normal duties in society, he was invited to abandon all and dedicate himself fully to the quest of the Absolute, the One without a second. The monks have had to defend the search for the Absolute in the *gubā* against the attacks of the *nāstikas* and materialists. They have been held in esteem throughout the history of India and even today, in spite of some abuses they are so central to the spiritual soul of India that no one who has not encountered a genuine monk has any understanding of India, and India remains for him a closed book.³¹

Hence we say that India's special contribution to the Church will be best transmitted through her monks, whose function and message will be a witnessing to the primacy of the mystery of God in His transcendence and immanence, the unique value of the spiritual and the eternal. India, then, will be the "contemplative heart"³² of the Church. It follows that if contemplation in its monastic form has always been held in esteem in the Church and in India then a meeting between the two on the level of monasticism would be a great challenge for the Church to be truly and fully herself. The Church can meet India fruitfully and meaningfully only on the ground on which she has been placed by her Creator: that of contemplation. Now we shall consider briefly certain aspects of monastic life in the Church and in India so that we may see how the two traditions are in fact very close to one another and how the Indian sannyasa tradition can be assumed by the Church.

a. *The Monk and Silence*

In Christianity the monk chooses to live with God and accepts a necessary seclusion in order to fulfil the only function demanded of him by society, that of being a silent adorer of God in the name of the whole humanity, especially in the name of the Church. He accepts the difficult solitude not because of selfishness or unconcern for others, but precisely in order to be closer to humanity. Christian monasticism began as pure anchoritism, and the conventual form was introduced only gradually. Community life, to a greater or lesser degree is now the norm of all monasteries, but even there silence, both exterior and interior, makes the monk a solitary, so that he can perfectly commune with the sole One, as St Benedict did, who in his cave "alone in the sight of the Heavenly Witness was dwelling *within himself*".³³

Silence which is an essential requisite in all forms of monastic life is not taken as a penance, but as a joyful privilege of the monk who sees contacts as necessary only in order to help others towards God or to assist and intensify his own life of contemplation.

If silence and solitude are important for the christian monk, they are even more central in the life of the monk in India. Once initiated by the guru, the hindu monk is left completely to himself, to be alone with the Absolute with or without a vow of perpetual silence. He is a *munivar*.³⁴ In spite of all the changes taking place in India, Monchanin says, there seems to be one thing only that will never change, the existence of the muni. Normally munis live alone, though *mathas* (monasteries) are not unknown in India where many disciples live around a guru in an ashram. Even the members of an ashram are free to wander and live like *parivrājyas*, itinerant monks.

b. *The Monk is Poor*

A second characteristic note of monastic life both Indian and christian is the element of renunciation. The monk possesses nothing. The teaching of Christ on renunciation is clear: sell all, give up all things and follow Him. The poverty envisaged by Monchanin is not the poverty usually met with in christian religious communities, which fails to impress the hindu.³⁵ Monchanin envisages poverty in food, dress, lodging and emphasises sobriety in architecture. The Indian sannyasi is by definition a renouncer; when he leaves the *grhastha* (the state of householder) he gives up all right to own even a house. He possesses nothing but his scanty clothes, alms-bowl and his stick. His self-surrender to divine providence is total. He lives on the things received from day to day. The Indian *sāstras* permit only vegetarian food and forbid all alcoholic drinks. The monk should normally wear the *kāvi*, an ochre-coloured dress.

c. *Pax—Sānti*

A third characteristic of monastic life is the Benedictine *pax* which condenses all its spiritual aspirations. In the christian sense peace is order, harmony, unity, quietude and silence. One of the fundamental mottos of the Indian Ashram is *sānti*, which is a sign of God. *Sānti* and *ānanda* were considered the real signs of a *jivanmukta*, the highest and final spiritual stage.³⁶

d. *Contemplation*

Important as the above elements are, what really characterises monastic life is contemplation by which the monk makes God his only "occupation". Contemplation is *the* 'work' of the monk.³⁷ As we have seen earlier it enables the Church to be her true self, for no local church is complete without the possibility of contemplation in its monastic form. Monastic life, then, is a foretaste of the Church in its eschatological stage, where God is all in all. In the next section we shall consider contemplation in practice in the life of an Indian christian monk.

5 *Indian-Christian Ashram*

A short note on the attempt of Monchanin to integrate christian monastic tradition and the Indian tradition is in place. The aim of his ashram was evangelisation, the christianisation of India, the assimilation of the deepest riches of India. He did not intend it to be a means for converting people or for making the apostolate more fruitful. "The monk is not a 'converter', he is a witness".³⁸ The ashram however would only be one of the elements of the total integration of the thought and life of India into Christ. The aim of the monk would be nothing less than the "christian integration of hindu spiritual tradition itself".³⁹ Since the monk is to be a witness to the absoluteness of God, he is to be totally dedicated to the search of God, and his specific role is to be the contemplation of the Trinity as we shall see presently. In his use of sacred texts, hindu and buddhist scriptures should have an important place. Only by first immersing themselves in the hindu search of God can the monks christianise it.

In external appearances the Indian monastic life would follow the monastic tradition of the Church basing itself on the Rule of St. Benedict, which is known for its discretion, and whose ideals like peace, poverty and silence respond to India's need. This however would be a preliminary stage to creating India's own particular monastic rule. If Indian monasticism is to be built on the Benedictine Rule, it should not reproduce the European style of life in India; instead, the Indian way of life has to be assumed into the framework of the Rule, so that the Indian-christian sannyasi is hardly distinguishable from his hindu counterpart. According to Monchanin, "such a scrupulous and

strict attachment to the Indian ways of life...is to be considered amongst the absolute essentials of the proposed Institute".⁴⁰ Ancient monastic practices are not to be followed blindly, but whatever is not opposed to the Gospel must be taken into account and integrated.

In conclusion we may say that the assimilation of the spiritual values of India has to be undertaken by the monk who interiorises the spiritual quest of India in himself and becomes a hindu-christian meeting point. Hence, Monchanin says, "it is in the inviolable sanctuary of a meditating conscience that the encounter between India and Christianity will take place".⁴¹ In the name of and for India the christian monk is dedicated to God. He stands before God as a "holocaust of praise", and in him would be realised the Pleroma of Christ, and the reality of the Church. In his silent face-to-face with God he would discover the Logos hidden in the Indian soil and enable India to meet Christ. Realising in himself more fully than others the essential reality of the Church, he would give a much more meaningful witness. India cannot but acknowledge in a purely monastic institution and, in the contemplative monk within the Church, "the realisation of her aspirations, her own ideals, and finally tend to understand and accept the message of the Church".⁴²

III. BLESSED TRINITY AND ENCOUNTER WITH HINDUISM

By meditating and assimilating the teachings of the Sacred Scriptures of Hinduism and seeing the workings of God in them, Monchanin was convinced that the Blessed Trinity, especially the Holy Spirit, the "Uncircumscribed", "Formless" Person would quench India's thirst for the Absolute, the Formless, the One without a second. Long hours of contemplation convinced him that India was "awaiting" though not consciously, "the revelation of the mystery of the Trinity, inaccessible equally to metaphysical genius as well as to holiness".⁴³ She awaits a God absolutely simple, and absolutely One, a God who is fulness; a God who is not personal (if personal implies even the slender duality of a subject-object relation) but a God who is triply-hyper-personal. Only this christian mystery will give balance to India, reveal her to herself and complete her by going beyond

her, through a "conversion from within, a transformation analogous to the miracle of Cana". For the "water of India, of a single taste, of undifferentiated unity, will be trans-substantiated into the wine of inebriation of Christianity, whose unique taste is composed of the compenetrations of the three tastes of the Father, the Word and the Spirit".

1. *The Indian Quest for the Absolute*

We do not intend to delineate the whole development of the idea of the search of God in Hinduism. We shall merely point out the aspect under which Monchanin considers India's quest of the Absolute. Beginning from a double polytheism of Dravidian and Aryan origin, passing through henotheism, there emerges the idea of an impersonal, formless Absolute while at the same time religious Hinduism searches for a Person with whom union is possible.⁴⁴ The *Jñāna mārga*, without denying the value of the performance of religious duties, transcends them all, and seeks only the Absolute beyond name and form and every phenomenon, the *nirguna* Brahman. Bhakti on the other hand insists on having its personal God—a God who remains with men. The eternal tension between the personal and the impersonal, the formless and the benevolent God, the God of the philosopher and of the devotee continues. Sankara who, in his philosophy brought absolute purity to the idea of God, was perhaps a Saivite. India knows the Absolute as beyond, the unknowable, the *neti-neti*:

Not by speech, not by mind,

Not by sight can He be apprehended.

How can He be comprehended

Otherwise than by one's saying, "He is"? (*Katha Up.* 6.12)

Unseen, unspeakable, ungraspable, unthinkable,

Unnameable, without distinctive marks, tranquil (*sānta*)

Benign (*siva*), without a second (*a-dvaita*). (*Māndukya Up.* 7)

If the Absolute, then, is One without a second, India knows also that that simplicity veils a life, it is a unity which is rich, all-embracing (Ramanuja). The understanding of God as the Absolute, One without a second, is the basic intuition of the Upanishads.⁴⁵ India cannot conceptualise the Absolute yet she will name it *Saccidānanda*. Being-Knowledge-Bliss, not as attributes but as Reality itself, "they are its very stuff".⁴⁶ The ambiguity

and the problem of the personal-impersonal continue even to this day. Its solution is in the Trinity, as we shall see later.

2. *The Indian-Christian Monk and Contemplation of the Trinity*

We have observed earlier that the primary occupation of monks is prayer and that it is the "permanent state of their soul and the very breath of their holy life".⁴⁷ The only occupation that society demands of the monk is that he be a contemplative. As Monchanin envisaged the monastic life, vocal prayer is important and may not be neglected, and the Benedictine monk is a specialist of the liturgy; but he insists that it is to the silence of contemplation that the Indian christian should let himself be drawn. The mark of the Indian sannyasi is the burning sense of the divine Presence; just as the hindu sannyasi is asked to focus his mind upon the *nirguna* Brahman, the Absolute devoid of attributes in its pure simplicity, so the christian monk is invited to "concentrate his mind and heart (not exclusively, but primarily)—beyond the mysteries of creation, Incarnation and Redemption themselves—on the very mystery of God, the Blessed Trinity".⁴⁸ This needs to be explained. We shall state how Monchanin places this type of spirituality within christian tradition and then examine if such a procedure is correct in relation to what he himself says about the place of Christ.

3. *The Christian mystical paths*

By christian mysticism Monchanin understands the sharing of God's life, the sharing of the Trinitarian relationship, an intuition above image and concept, a direct experience—not man-made but God-given—an existential contact with God in himself and for himself.⁴⁹ He divides the "christian mystical approach to the Absolute" into two ways: the analogical and the apophatic. The analogical is the way of signs: beginning with creatures a person ascends to the living God; and the ascent from the sensible and intelligible is justified by man's nature and the christian dogma of creation, the sacraments—the use of material things as "instruments" of sanctification—and the resurrection of the body. Founded on the immanence of God, this way followed by most of the mystics, finds its best illustration in St Francis of Assisi.

In the apophatic approach God is seen as unlike anything else and "he who wants to contemplate Him as He is in Him-

self, must transcend not only the plane of imagery, but also the plane of concepts—our last and most dangerous idols".⁵⁰ The basis of this approach is the transcendence of God. The Old Testament calls God the "hidden One" and allows no image of Him. In the New Testament, St Paul tells us that our knowledge of God through faith is like a reflection in a mirror and an enigma; St John affirms that nobody has ever seen God. Apophatism was also emphasised by the Greek Fathers: St Basil, St. Gregory of Nazianzen, St Gregory of Nyssa, St John Chrysostom. St Gregory of Nazianzen, for example, says,

Thou art beyond all!

How couldst Thou be extolled by words: no word can reach Thee.

How couldst Thou be praised by thought: no thought can grasp Thee.

The unspeakable art Thou, O Maker of every speaking being.

O Maker of every knowing being Thou art unknowable...

Thou art the end of all, and one, and all

Yet none, yet no thing, yet not whole.

Thou the unnameable, how could I name Thee!⁵¹

The Flemish and German school of mystics, too, follows the same path. Eckhart distinguishes between God and the Godhead: God as related and God as absolute. What is essential in Ruysbroeck's mysticism is the "perfect synthesis of extreme apophatism with the deepest Trinitarian vision".⁵² At the apex of the experience of union without difference, the distinction between the essence of God and that of the soul remains. The mysticism of St John of the Cross too is a fusion of Trinitarian contemplation with the contemplation of the oneness of the Deity. He speaks of an incredible union, of oneness: "she (the soul) becomes deiform and God by participation...that she should also perform her work of understanding, knowledge and love—or rather, should have it performed in the Trinity, together with It, and like the Trinity itself...herein the soul is like to God...".⁵³ Within and beyond the experience of the Oneness, the soul "perceives" the distinctiveness. St John of the Cross also insists on the unknowability of God who is "incomprehensible and transcends all understanding", who "transcends understanding and is therefore incomprehensible, inaccessible to it...".⁵⁴ This unknowable God can be reached only through faith. Monchanin however, reminds us that a man has to remain on the

way of signs unless and until he is constrained by the Spirit to pass to the apophatic way for which there is one fundamental condition which calls for our attention: the soul must acknowledge its nothingness in order to receive everything from God. St John of the Cross insists that not only vices and desires should be mortified but "the soul's entire nature".⁵⁵ Besides, all these mystics insist that union with God is a gift, and what man can do is merely to remove the obstacles.

4. *Apophatic Mysticism and Christ*

How are we to understand the mysticism which wants to go beyond the incarnation and redemption to God in Himself? First of all we should remember that Monchanin insists very much on the centrality of Christ, and the fact that He is the only way, and that no one goes to the Father except through Him. He is the only and indispensable way to God. "Remain in Christ", Monchanin told the Poor Clares of Rabat. "We do not touch God except through the Incarnation, through Christ...".⁵⁶ Speaking of the apophatic way he says:

Through Christ full man and full God—the way—to the abyss of fathomless Godhead, wrapped in its mystery and silence. Christ as man is the starting point. The same Christ, as God, is the final goal. And at this ultimate stage, God is meditated upon as He is: in his essence, in his absolute Godhead.⁵⁷

The Abbé goes on to say that to concentrate on the *Godhead* as distinguished from *God* means: "to look at the divine Essence, not as it appears to us, but as it is in Itself, beyond human grasp and understanding: the unknown and unknowable 'Beyond' to which the praise of Silence is the only Hymn". As God manifests Himself in his Son, the visible Image of the Invisible God, we can knowingly or unknowingly—often unknowingly—reach God the Absolute, the supremely transcendent and superemely immanent, only in and through the Son, Jesus. Hence there is no by-passing of Christ by deliberate volition, though there may be an unconscious by-passing in the sense that when one finds everything in the mystery of the Trinity, as soon as one is in contemplation, the mind is at rest in the Absolute, and there is an absolute silence. The great problem here is the "infinite" distance and difference between an experiential and an intellectual knowledge of God, between which there is no common

language, and the inability of the mystic to express in words or in any other manner what he experiences. All the mystics bear witness to this difficulty. With this explanation of the statement that the christian monk should concentrate on the *nirguna*, it remains for us to consider the basic issue: the Trinity fulfils the aspirations of Hinduism.

IV. THE BLESSED TRINITY, FULFILMENT OF HINDUISM

Monchanin's expectation for India and the whole of his theology of the Trinity as the fulfilment of India's quest for the One without a second is well summarised in the following statement:

Are we not entitled to expect that, through acknowledging the "Indwelling God", the mystery of the universal and deifying presence of the Holy Ghost, India, in rising upwards to the "One without a second", *ekam eva advitiyam* (*Chāndogya Up.* 6.2.2.) will find at length the mystery of the Father's Love overflowing into the Plenitude of His Incarnate Son?⁵⁸

The one conviction manifested in all his writings is that only the Blessed Trinity will satisfy the aspirations of India, which "is the land of the Trinity". Monchanin desired greatly that his own life be a Trinitarian contemplation, which assumes, purifies and transfigures all the thought, art and millennial experience of India.

India must become conscious of her greatness, her quest for the Absolute in its purity, rejecting all anthropomorphism, finiteness and multiplicity in it. The great Hindu mystics aspire to go beyond the sphere of phenomena—even the avatars—in order to merge themselves in the abyss of the One without a second, so pure as to be unnameable. He is *nirguna*, Sat, Being. Sankara would even sacrifice creation to save the purity of the conception of God. India should also become conscious of her problem: she cannot reconcile God and the world, the One and the many, she oscillates between a personal and an impersonal God, between a hidden and a manifest God, between an impersonal metaphysics and a personalist religion. This oscillation manifests the dissatisfaction both of philosophy and of spiritual experience in trying to apply any categories to the ineffable, and

it also shows a hidden longing for an uncircumscribed and less anthropomorphic notion of person. Ancient Greece had no idea of person, yet could give expression to the christian mystery of the Trinity. India too must come to know the riches of the Trinitarian mystery which alone can solve her antinomies without destroying in any way her exigency of purity.

Because of India's emphasis on the search for the purely spiritual, our approach to Hinduism has to reveal the christian mystery from within: *ab interioribus ad exteriora*, from the purely spiritual to the incarnate, or more precisely, from a contemplation of the Spirit who is the "completion" of the Trinity, to the risen Lord, from the risen Lord to the Suffering Servant—the mortal man Jesus. So too from the invisible Church to the visible, from the hidden *ātman* to the concrete person.⁵⁹ The Christian mystery alone can reveal India to herself and balance and perfect her by making her go beyond herself in a conversion and transformation from within.

The Blessed Trinity solves the antinomy of the One and the many.⁶⁰ The christian God is absolutely simple and absolutely One, but He is not a closed unity, but a unity open to communion: he is fulness. The unity is not destroyed by the "Otherness" (nor by creation, as we shall see later) but constitutes it. For the "Otherness" is the three subsistent relations within the unity which is a unity of circumincession. This unity is not one of absorption nor of exclusion but a non-multiple *a-dvaita* (that is, not adding up nor multiplying), including a Triad which like the one (*Unum*) transcends all numerical categories. The irreducible monism and pluralism of India reconcile themselves by doing away with their boundaries in this unity of the Triad.

The Trinity is in itself essentially Love, Gift of self to self and reciprocal inhabitation, which does not imply any spatial or temporal extension. This unity is "constituted" by the "giving" itself. We speak of an origin, middle and end; but the "point of departure", the Father, the "intermediary point", the Word, and the "point of arrival", the Spirit rigorously coincide in the coeternity of the Persons in the sense that no one of them is anterior or posterior, and in the unity of the divine essence. As St Denis of Alexandria says Unity expands into Trinity without increase and gathers the Trinity into Unity without diminution.⁶¹ In God, the One and the Three call for each other: without plurality of persons there would be no person. There cannot possibly be a Father with-

out the Word-Son (who is from the Father); nor a Spirit without the Father and the Word (*procedens ab utroque tamquam ab uno principio*). At the same time without unity, there would not be one God, but only gods.

The Trinity is not infrapersonal like a thing or a law. It cannot be inferior to anything whatever. It is not personal, if personal implies a subject-object duality even if only of the ideal order; nor personal in the sense in which a person is identified with egocentrism (*ahamkāra*) or with the "circumscribed", limited individuality (*pudgala*). In Hinduism the very fact of the identification of the *ātman* with the Brahman seems to bestow on the Brahman some sort of transcendent personality—it is not non-self. Now the christian Trinity is triply-hyperpersonal. The triplicity of the persons in the unity of their communion excludes all egocentrism (*ahamkāra*) for their "myself" is a 'towards-the-other'; it also transcends all limitation (*pudgala*) for thanks to the circumincession each person extends beyond the limits of his otherness. Their self, *ātman*, is the Absolute, the Brahman.⁶²

Monchanin holds that the constitutive element of the divine person is *co-esse*: each is a Person only by his relation to the other. The *esse* is interior to the *co-esse*: each divine Person is absolutely ordered towards the Other and relatively towards creation. The human person is an image of God and is constituted by a *pour-soi* (*esse-sibi*) which cannot be communicated, and an essential communicability (*esse-ad*): one grows with the other.⁶³ One has to be in order to give. In human persons, therefore, the *esse in se* may be said to be "anterior", "prior" to the *esse ad*, but in the Trinity the *esse in* coincides with the *esse ad* and is, in a sense, interior to it and also interior to the *co-esse*. The "otherness" in God is unique for in Him the otherness constitutes His unified existence as One.

Commenting on *Colossians* 2, 9: "For it is in Christ that the complete being of the Godhead dwells embodied", Monchanin says that Christ is the *saguna* and *nirguna*, the Manifest and the Unmanifest in the One Person of the Word. We considered this aspect earlier while speaking of apophatic mysticism.

Before we pass on to the consideration of the Third Person of the Trinity, a word on creation is in place. Creation does not destroy the Absolute unity of God. If God were simply a closed

unity, no creation would be possible. But since Revelation tells us that God is gift in Himself, of self to the self, and His unity is a unity of Communion, God can "diffuse" "outside" of himself and associate beings to His very life. The *co-esse* of the Three Persons is a perfect inclusion of three, each a perfect "diffusiveness."⁶⁴ God does not enter into composition with the world: He is transcendent, and by creation nothing is added to perfection or Being. The revealed fact of creation out of nothing safeguards the purity and transcendence of God without abolishing the world. If God has created the world freely to communicate His Word and Joy, and if He has sent His Son His Spirit, the divine essence has not undergone the least change and He remains the All-Other.

1. *The Holy Spirit and Hinduism*

Monchanin insists very often that it is the third Person of the Trinity that India "awaits" with special eagerness. The trinitarian rhythm beginning in the unfathomable abyss of the Father passes through the Word and has completion in the Spirit; then returns from the Spirit through the Son to the abyss of the Father. We are seized by the last Person who is, so to say, on the "border" of the Trinity. He leads and configures us to Christ, who in his turn leads us to the abyss of the Father.⁶⁵ The Spirit Becomes the more manifest of the three, both in the "Trinity" and in the "Economy" if we employ a dynamic notion of person, namely, of an *esse-ad* or *co-esse*, of subsistent Gift. He is Gift, the minimum of *esse-sui* and the maximum of *esse-ad*. Images of Him are those of fluid forms like wind, water, fire, metamorphoses; to Him are ascribed spiritual gifts especially agape and a mysterious immanence in all things; thus He is the most "uncircumscribed" of the Persons. Being Love, He is the Person *par excellence*, the *esse ad*. He is the unity of the Trinity and unity of communion, for He proceeds from Unity and makes Unity, for He is also called Gift, Love, Perfection, Fulfilment, the extreme point of "Concentration" and "Expansion": the end of the *exodos* and the origin of the *prosodos* of the One into the Three, of Three into the One.⁶⁶

The emphasis on the Spirit is not meant to lead to a "mysticism of the Spirit" alone, for the "mysticism of the Spirit" is also that of the Son and of the Father, for the Spirit sent by the Son causes us to know Christ in his essence and makes us pass from his mortal body to his glorified humanity

and to the life of the Trinity—a parallel to Christ's being sent by the Father and making the Father known to us. From Him India will pass to the Word in glory, then to the Word in suffering, to his earthly life and Incarnation. Finally she will be perfected in the bosom of the Father, the non-manifest Person, manifest only in the eternal birth of the Son, in the Procession of the Spirit and in the temporal mission of both Word and Spirit.

Meditation on the Spirit will throw light on India's problem of the 'personality' of God, and also on the question of the spirituality of Yoga. As we have seen, the Spirit's "uncircumscribed" personality is non-anthropomorphic and as total gift is unlimited and thus shows a line of solution to India's problem. We shall now consider briefly how the Spirit answers the deepest spiritual aspiration of Yoga.⁶⁷

Yoga may be compared to the spiritual way of the Greek Fathers. Evagrius, for example, searches for God in the image that resides in the most secret place of the soul, once the spirit has been stripped of everything. Though Yoga has an underlying philosophy, that of *Sāṃkhya*, it is primarily a method and a discipline which teaches self-mastery, detachment, integration and perfect interiorisation. Self-mastery through control of the senses, breath, imagination and thought: concentration of the person from the periphery to the innermost self. The final stage of the Yoga discipline, as Monchanin understands it, may be an openness to the Absolute, or may lead to a closing up of the self on the self:⁶⁸ at the extreme point of self-mastery, of perfect interiorisation, being, thought and self become identical.⁶⁹ But at this point of utmost concentration of destitution of all that is not the pure self, there occurs something that is antagonistic to this psychology: the negation of the *ātman* in as much as it is distinct from the Absolute. This negation signifies in Hinduism, where truth is spiritual realisation, the negation of the *sui* and of the *in se* in view of a radical elimination of the *sibi*: "enucleation of the centre in order to abolish all centripetal movement". This is the height, or the depth, of a mystical dying in order to be "born again" in the Absolute. If such a death is refused and the isolated self closes itself in on itself, then Yoga is an illusory reduction of the Absolute to the emptied individuality; if the death is accepted, then there will be expansion into the Absolute: ecstasy conditioned by enstasy. An ecstasy which is not open is suicidal. Yoga, then, is a positive and a negative preparation leading to this mystical night.⁷⁰ The reason why Monchanin considers it as an intellectual

and spiritual propaedeutic for the night of the soul, is that in the negative path the christian mystic too follows the same pattern of *kenosis* and death: this is the condition for deifying union. The mystic who is under the motion of the Spirit undergoes the very mystery of Christ's death in order to rise in the All-Other. Monchanin says that even the great mystics like Eckhart, Ruysbroek, St John of the Cross and others bury themselves in a "God without modes" only through the imitation of Christ crucified and passing through the "wood of the Cross".⁷¹ St John of the Cross experienced the opposing poles in the self-same mystic movement: night and fire, total negation—of self, of the world, even of God as felt and understood—and fullness of communion beyond love and knowledge, with a God, One and Three, yet without modes. "Plunging into the wood of the Cross", desiring nothing but to imitate the Christ emptied of self, St John of the Cross enters at the same time into the risen Christ, moves within the trinitarian relations and loses himself in the abyss of the Godhead. It is a tension between the total otherness and at the same time absolute unity.

Indian negative mysticism, which does enter into the "night", senses beyond its emptiness a plenitude, *sat-cit-ānanda*. The Mission of the Word and the Mission of the Spirit from the Father reveal and communicate this Fulness. The third Person whom we have seen as the least circumscribed, and whose personality is the most manifest, if considered as *esse ad*, is the final concentration and ultimate expansion in the Trinity and thus, in the Economy, seems to be at the horizon of the purifying asceticism of the negative metaphysics of Yoga. The contemplative "concentration" has no need to shut itself in upon an individual *ātman*, or on the undifferentiated Brahman: its alternative is to turn to the Spirit who surpasses all forms, even all metaphysical structures, and yet is a Person. This third Person manifests the depths of the second, who in turn makes us see the unfathomable abyss of the Father. Thus the mystery of the "uncircumscribed" Person, the Spirit, situated at the convergence of the search for a personal God and the search for an impersonal God, fulfils the aspirations for a Person who is not limited nor ego-centred.⁷² Before we conclude this section we would like to make two observations, one on the insufficiency of advaita and the second on the Trinity and *Saccidānanda*.

2. *Insufficiency of advaita*

Monchanin's approach to Hinduism through the search for the One without a second may give the impression that he envisages advaita as the real meeting point, especially because he says that "the search for a meeting between Hinduism and Christianity on the bhakti level is simply a temptation of facility".⁷³ But it would be wrong to think that he considers advaita as such a meeting point. He affirms that his point of view is neither that of Sankara nor that of Saiva Siddhānta or of any other system, "but what is either common or essential to Hinduism as a whole".⁷⁴ Advaita too must pass through the glorifying death of the Cross and must give up the equation *ātman-brahman*, which would be possible only in a rethought presentation of creation out of nothing and of the Trinity, as we saw earlier. Monchanin even doubts positively if through the way of advaita one can reach the essence of Christianity.⁷⁵

His emphasis is rather on the fact that in Hinduism priority is given to *jñāna* which is not conceptual knowledge, but assimilation and intuition, just as in orthodox Catholic tradition it is *satyam*, truth in every sense: *Sat*, being, truth and holiness. In the Gita (10.10) Krishna promises such a knowledge to his devotee. Monchanin does emphasise the importance of the non-intellectual *jñāna* but recognises that alone it is not enough. Now a balance between the theology and mysticism of love and a theology and mysticism of knowledge ought to be achieved, but it is possible only with reference to the substantial Truth of the Word, the substantial Love of the Spirit and the dynamic relation each has to the One Trinity, where Knowledge and Love exist one by the other and call for each other. The Abbé looks forward to the day when a "ray of darkness" of the Trinity will shine in the light of advaita. India must proceed from this light (of the advaita) to that darkness, from the "enstasis of the act of knowing in the act of being" to the substantial "ex-stasis" of the love of the Trinitarian God.⁷⁶

3. *The Trinity and Sat-Cit-Ānanda*

We can only mention the relation between the *Saccid-ānanda* and the christian Trinity underlying the whole of Monchanin's theology of the Trinity. The very name of the Ashram he founded (*Saccidānanda Ashram*) implies that he had taken this word to translate the christian mystery of the Trinity into

Sanskrit.⁷⁷ Though he often uses the words *sat-cit-ānanda* for the Trinity he does not provide much explanation. His approach is by way of "fulfilment", by way of finding a *sensus plenior* to the words of the Upanishadic texts, just as in the New Testament words of the Old Testament find a fuller sense. A christian meditating on the *Saccidānanda*, which Abhishiktananda says is the highest and best expression of God outside the revelation of the Trinity, gives these words a fuller meaning, a new and mysterious meaning, unknowable by man's effort but communicated to all mankind through the revelation of the Word and the Spirit. The christian when thinking of the Father, the origin without origin, the Source and End of the "expansion" and the "recollection" of the divine life, can say *Sat*, Being; in the same way, he can say *Cit*, Thought, when considering the Logos, the consubstantial Image of the Existent; and *Ānanda*, Bliss, Joy when meditating on the Spirit, the "non-duality" of Father and Son. These words are not used as attributes of God, but they express what He is: *Sat, Cit, Ānanda*.

V. SUMMARY AND EVALUATION

Monchanin approaches Hinduism from the point of view of its total christianisation—conversion from within, transformation into Christ. He was first and foremost a missionary who had nothing so much at heart as the conversion of India, which he understood as the inner transformation not only of a person but of a whole culture, of all the values and riches existing in a particular civilisation. His meditation on the sacred Scriptures of Hinduism convinced him that there was something very precious in Hinduism that would be of incomparable value to the Church, whose task it was to assume, purify, and transfigure it; by this the Church herself would be perfected in her very being: for the pearl of exquisite beauty which India possesses, namely, her thirst for the Absolute, for the Spiritual, for the One without a second, and her readiness to sacrifice all for it, would be an excellent adornment for the Bride of Christ. Every nation and culture brings her its gifts, and she cannot be indifferent to any, for she should recognise in these various civilisations the presence and workings of Her Lord and of her animating Spirit, the Spirit of Christ. She is sent to harvest the

fruits of the Spirit and perfect whatever is incomplete while at the same time enriching herself.

The christianisation of India is beset with difficulties: even India's own religious sense seems to be an obstacle. No re-interpretation of the vedanta will convince a hindu, though it can be of interest and value to the believer; the hindu will only patiently wait for the conversion of the christian. Our social works like education can only have a preparatory value, none can replace the essential mission of the Church, that of being the spiritual guru, spiritual teacher, which in fact she is. As yet the spiritually enlightened, deeply religious men of India cannot recognise her as a spiritual teacher; she is all activity, and does not allow her spiritual nature to shine forth to those who ask of her not works like education or nursing—necessary and important as they are—but the living experience of the Spirit, of Christ, of the Father. Hence the meeting with Hinduism is a challenge for the Church: perhaps the greatest challenge she ever had to face, for here she has to be fully her true self. Nothing short of holiness, nothing less than the life of the Beatitudes can convince a hindu of her spiritual nature. All external changes, reforms and adaptations would leave the hindu unmoved, but if the Church allows the Spirit of Christ to shine forth in her, then the hindu cannot be indifferent to her. And her presentation of Christ to him has to be highly spiritual: beginning with the perfection of Love, the Spirit, through the Risen and Glorious Lord to His humanity in suffering and finally to the Incarnation, and thence to the Father, the Unknown and Unknowable.

It is precisely in this challenge that we perceive how well India and the Church are meant for each other. Each has to find the other in her essence and thus find her fulfilment. India's spiritual quest for the Absolute has been realised and best expressed in her monks and sannyasis. The monk has ever been held in esteem by the religious minded hindu, in spite of all the changes taking place in India. The sadhus are known for their spirit of renunciation, solitary life and dedication to the quest of the Absolute. In the Church too there is provision for men and women to realise in themselves in silent adoration and contemplation of the Trinity the essentially spiritual nature of the Church—her eschatological reality. Hence the Church has no better way of meeting Hinduism than in and through her monks dedicated to the adoration of the most Holy Trinity. Living a life of total renunciation and dedica-

tion to the contemplation of the Trinity they would assimilate the hindu quest of the Absolute and thus christianise it. They would meditate on the sacred Scriptures of Hinduism, find their "fuller sense", assimilate the workings of the Spirit in them and discover the seeds of the Word. By this would come growth and maturity—primarily in themselves—making them the "first fruits" and "holocausts of adoration and praise" in the name of the Church and of India. These men would maintain christian truth in its purity free from all syncretism. The christian monk too will delve deep into the "cave" of the heart, like his hindu brother, and commune there with the Indwelling Guest, instead of shutting himself in on the self in isolation. He will accept the death of self in order to be "born again" into the Absolute. But only in proportion as he passes through this stage of interiority, total death to self, will he be able to assume and transfigure the hindu quest of the Absolute, the soul of India.

The Christian monk will assume all the classical spiritual ways of India: work without self-interest, *niskāmakarma*, the way of loving devotion, *bhakti*, and finally the *jñāna mārga* and he will make a real synthesis of them all. But a synthesis of the way of love and spiritual knowledge is possible only because of the Trinity: in It Knowledge and Love are one God, one cannot exist without the other. The christian Trinity, finally fulfils the aspirations of Hinduism: He is One, a unity of communion, Gift, mutual inhabitation, totally devoid of *ahamkāra* and *pudgala*, uncircumscribed and unlimited, not egocentric but essentially "other-oriented". The Holy Spirit is at the meeting point of the quest for the Personal God and the impersonal Deity. He leads the hindu brother to the glorified Lord and through Him to the Man Jesus, in whom alone will India understand the meaning of man and creation. Hence the Trinitarian mystery—the Mystery of the glorified Christ, through whom God is all in all, the cosmic and divine pleroma in the unity of His Person totally turned to the Father and the Spirit; the mystery of the Spirit, the most "uncircumscribed" Person in His manifestation, placed at the converging point of the contrasting quest of India for the Personal and the impersonal Divine; and the mystery of the Father, numinous, plunged in the unfathomable darkness of adoration—this mystery of the *Deus absconditus* in eternal tension, "expansion" and "re-collection" would quench the thirst of India for the Absolute, One without a second.⁷⁸

Monchanin's understanding of Hinduism, the reasons for the lack of growth of the Church and the solution he proposes are valuable. It should be kept in mind that he never proposes a "one and only" method. He accepts other interpretations of facts and other means of approach; but we cannot deny that what he has proposed is a way which profoundly respects the essential nature of the Church and the characteristic note of Hinduism. Obviously, he does not expect all christians to follow the method he proposes: it is for those who are called to it. When he says that the approach through bhakti is a temptation to follow the easy way, he is perhaps speaking of bhakti in its lower forms, for Christianity is not a religion of bhakti in that sense: it is bhakti and *jñāna*, love and knowledge. One might wish to reformulate the aim of the Mission of the Church today: yet we cannot but admire the vision and greatness of Monchanin's writings, especially if we keep in mind that the ideas presented earlier in this chapter about the Mission of the Church were written in the late thirties of this century.

While we admire Monchanin very much, it is good to point out that he has not sufficiently emphasised the contribution Hinduism and the hindu *Sat-Cit-Ānanda* can make to the christian concept of the Trinity. He has considered only the fulfilment Hinduism can find in the christian concept of the Trinity and neglected the completion of understanding that a christian can gain of the Trinity through the hindu *Sat-Cit-Ānanda*. I am sure that if Monchanin were alive today he would have developed more fully the mutual fulfilment aspect he has merely hinted at but not developed in his writings.

Monchanin has done us a great service in shaking us out of our self-complacency. He criticises no one, praises the good done by others, but turns our attention to something basic and central. As Bishop L. Raymond pointed out, he has created in us a "divine discontent" which compels us to re-assess our methods and approaches, and the Indian Church ought to be grateful to him for his inspiring example and teaching.⁷⁹ As we wait for the "final light", the Trinitarian "ray of darkness" to shine in the light of advaita, for the advent of India into the Church in order to realise the fulness of both, let us remember, as Monchanin says, that very often *amor intrat ubi intellectus stat ad ostium*,⁸⁰ "love can enter where the intellect must bide at the door." We can also hopefully expect with him that, as Greece

once "converted" to Christ became the leader of the western world in philosophy, theology and mysticism, so too India, once she is

baptised to the fulness of her body and soul, and to the depth of her age-long "quest of *Brahman*", will reject her pantheistic tendencies and, discovering in the splendours of the Holy Ghost the true mysticism and finding at long last the vainly longed-for philosophical and theological equilibrium between antagonistic trends of thought, will bring forth for the good of mankind and the Church and ultimately for God's glory, an unparalleled galaxy of Saints and Doctors.⁸¹

FOOT NOTES

Abbreviations used in this chapter are:

ABA = *A Benedictine Ashram*; Cont = "L'Inde et la Contemplation"; ErSac = *Ermîtes du Saccidananda*; ES = *Ecrits Spirituels*; EV = *Eglise Vivante*, 10 (1958); JM = *L'abbé Jules Monchanin*; Parallèle = "Parallèle regard sur l'Europe, sur l'Inde"; Perspectives = "Perspectives missionnaires"; Quest = "The Quest for the Absolute"; Recherche = "Recherche d'une spiritualité"; SPAA = *Swami Parama Arubi Anandam: a memorial*; Temps = "Le Temps selon l'Hindouisme et le Christianisme"; Théologie = "Théologie et mystique du Saint Esprit"; Up = *Upanishad*.

1. Henri de Lubac, *Images de l'abbé Monchanin*, 15.
2. Madeleine Biarreau, in JM, 118.
3. We shall mention just a few of the articles published at his death. In JM, 1-149; SPAA, 1-158; EV, 10 (1958) 5-70.
4. "His was perhaps the sharpest mind I met in my life" wrote J. Folliet in "Nécrologie," *Chronique sociale de France*, 66 (1958) 198. See EV, 8.
5. Cf. Monchanin, ES, 20. His one time Bishop said: "...all who came in contact with Abbé Monchanin remember him as an exceptional person, not just by the brilliance of his natural gifts but even more by the radiance of a man of God" EV, 28; H. de Lubac, *op.cit.*, 32-3; 35; 39; 62.
6. After reaching India he wrote: "thanksgiving for this year ... it has given me India, the land of the Trinity"; ES, 37. See, SPAA, 7; ES, 9; 18; 19; 25; 28; 42; 71; 73.
7. He wrote to one of his friends on 15-10-1941: "But am I truly an Indian? That is the question which torments me. You will help me to become one and so to realize my vocation", SPAA, 208.
8. Cf. ES, 19.
9. When I composed this chapter, the *Collected Works of Monchanin, Mystique de l'Inde, mystère chrétien*, (edited by S. Siauve, Fayard, 1974, pp. 328 + xii) was only in preparation. Unfortunately, some of the articles referred to in my essay and books like ES, ErSac, ABA are not in the collection. Hence I have thought it better to leave the references as they are.
10. "It is impossible to distil pure honey. It is impossible to summarise a talk by abbé Monchanin," wrote a Lyons newspaper after one of Monchanin's conferences there. Cf. JM, 131. The remark could be applied to most of his writings.
11. Monchanin, "Recherche d'une spiritualité (deux textes inédits de l'abbé Monchanin)" in *Terre Entière*, Sept-Oct. 1963, no. 1, 45-54; quotation on p. 50. "Parallèle regard sur l'Inde", in *Cahiers des Auxiliaries Laïques des Missions*, Brussels, 4-5.

12. Cf. *ErSac*, 42-4; 61-2; *ES*, 30; 67; "Malentendu", in *Eglise Vivante*, 7 (1955) 86-97, 91.
13. It ought to be mentioned that in this section we can no more than mention the rich insights of Monchanin. Cf. *Recherche*; "Perspectives Missionnaires", in *News bulletin of the Societas Auxiliorum Missionum*, nos. 41, 42, 43 (1939); "Jalons pour une théologie missionnaire", in *Bdcs JB* (mimeographed series), Dec. 1953, 2-6; "L'Eglise et la Pensée Indienne" in *Bulletin des Missions*, 15 (1936), 254-7. The primary sources are *Recherche* and *Perspectives*.
14. Karl Rahner postulates a "cosmic" relation to matter even for the "separated" soul, cf. "death", in *Theological Dictionary*, New York, 1965, 116.
15. Cf. *ABA*, 13. As we shall see later, if contemplation is the primary duty of the Church, and if each local Church constitutes a relatively independent unit, it should also have this essential characteristic in visible form. The Second Vatican Council says that for the "fulness of the Church's presence" contemplative life is necessary, Cf. *Ad Gentes*, n. 18.
16. Cf. *Perspectives*, 41, 7-8; *Parallèle*, 4-5; *Recherche*, 47.
17. For these paragraphs, cf. *ES*, 132ff; *L'Eglise et la pensée Indienne*, 254ff; *Religions et civilisations Indiennes*, 618-9; *Cont*, 15ff; "Enigmes Dravidiennes" in *Approches de l'Inde*, *Cahiers du Sud*, 1949, 300-6. *ErSac*, 45.
18. In fact his own personal example shows that he demands from the missionary a thorough knowledge of the past. He was himself a man steeped in the Greek and European culture which enabled him to immerse himself in hindu civilisation and religion.
19. For this section see, *ErSac*, 32-7; 40f; 86; 93; 97; "L'Heure de l'Inde", 36; "Malentendu", 86-7.
20. Cf. *ErSac*, 41ff; Cf. *Katha Up.* 6, 12; *Mundaka Up.* 3, 1, 8; *Mândûkyâ Up.* 7.
21. Cf. Monchanin, "Hinduism", in *Bulletin des Facultés Catholiques de Lyon*, Jul-Dec. 1946, 26-41; "The Christian Approach to Hindus", in *India Missionary Bulletin*, 1 (1952) 46-50; "L'Heure de l'Inde", 235ff; *ES*, 99ff; *ErSac*, 37, 78-9.
22. Dr. R. Panikkar discusses the untenability of the position "equality of all religions" in "A Dialectical Excursus on the Unity or Plurality of Religions" in *Monchanin Information*, 11 (1969), 2-12. I may mention that not all hindu scholars would admit that all religions are equal. See above, Chapter 2, note 19. On the superiority of Hinduism, cf. D.S. Sarma, *The Renaissance of Hinduism*, Benares, 1944, 304.
23. Cf. *ABA*, 59. Monchanin's life was primarily one of witness; Cf. *JM*, 76; 97-98; Duperray says: It is his life, even more than his work, that is a witness. It is a life perfectly united in God, totally devoted to the service of the Church to bring her to her consummation in the glory of the Trinity." In "L'Abbé Monchanin, *Parole et Mission*, 1 (1958) 55-61, quote on p. 61. cf. "Quest", in *SPAA*, 187.

24. ABA, 10; cf. 9-24; *ErSac*, 13ff; *L'Inde et la Contemplation*.
25. Cf. note 24; Monchanin: "Culture et Loisirs", in *Chronique Sociale de France*, 47 (1938), 402-21. Cf. also Pius XI, *Rerum Ecclesiae*, Feb. 1926; *Umbratilem*, July, 1924.
26. We may remark that this form of life has been encouraged and its place and value in the Church re-affirmed by the Second Vat. Council: *Ad Gentes*, 18; *Perfectae Caritatis*, 5; 7 etc., *Lumen Gentium*, 41.
27. For this paragraph, cf. *ErSac*, 35ff; ABA, 32ff; Pius XII, "Christmas Allocution," 1945.
28. Cf. *ErSac*, 32-7; 73; *ES*, 85. For the relation between India and the Old Testament, cf. Monchanin, "L'Inde et l'esprit de l'Ancien Testament", in *Terre Entière*, Sept. Oct., 1963, 49-54.
29. Cf. Monchanin, "Quest," 181ff; ABA, 15; *Parallèle*, 4-5. *Cont.* 21ff. We shall return to this quest of the Unknowable Absolute in the next section. Here we want only to point out that according to Monchanin there is a thirst for the Absolute, the One without a second.
30. For a fairly good treatment of the history and development of monasticism in India, cf. G.S. Ghurye, *Indian Sadhus*, Bombay, 1953; K. Klostermaier, "Sadhana, a Sketch of Indian Spirituality" in *Religion and Society*, 16 (1969) 36-50. The importance of the sannyasa tradition in India is generally accepted; cf. S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, London, 1969, 380ff; 105ff. He says, "The ideal man of India is not the magnanimous man of Greece or the valiant knight of medieval Europe, but the free man of spirit who has attained insight into the universal source by rigid discipline and practice of disinterested virtues, who has freed himself from the prejudices of his time and place", 381. A Sannyasi is such a one. D.S. Sarma, in *A Primer of Hinduism*, Madras, 1953, says: "All great men of India have been ascetics—from the Buddha to Gandhi. And all hindus, though they may not be able to live up to the idea of a sannyasin, are ardent admirers
31. Cf. *ErSac*, 32; for this section, cf. ABA, 24.
32. "Malentendu", 87. For this paragraph, cf. *l'Heure* 39; *ErSac*, 35; Le Saux, "Le Monachisme Chrétien aux Index," in *La Vie Spirituelle Supplément*, 9 (1956) 309.
33. "Solus in superni Inspectoris oculis habitavit secum", St. Gregory the Great, *Dial.* II, 3. (ABA, 56). For this paragraph, cf. *ErSac*, 113ff; ABA, 50ff.
34. Cf. *ErSac*, 177; for the development of the word *muni*, cf. Ghurye, *op. cit.*, 12f; 15.
35. Cf. ABA, 66. Cf. also Brahmabandhav Upadhyay, who after speaking of the type of poverty practised by christian religious says: "....If India is ever to be conquered, it will be conquered by the power of poverty—poverty in *Hindu* clothing, poverty synonymous with abstinence from meat and drink, living as mendicants in humble dwellings", *Sophia*, August 1898, 124.

36. Cf. ABA, 42.
37. Cf. *ErSac*, 151; 166; 174; ABA, 71.
38. Cf. *ErSac*, 63; ABA, 33.
39. *ErSac*, 56. See for this section, *ErSac*, 93f; *Cont.* 35; Abhishiktananda, *Saccidananda*, Delhi, 1974.
40. ABA, 47.
41. *ES*, 127.
42. ABA, 27.
43. *Cont.*, 23. For this whole section we depend very much on this article.
44. Cf. for this section, *Cont.*, 21ff; *Quest*, 181ff.
45. Cf. *Quest*, 182-3. Swami Nikhilananda, *Hinduism*, New York, 1958, 12ff; 116ff. Speaking of non-dualism he says that it is "the highest achievement of Indian mystical insight and philosophical speculation and her real contribution to world culture...." xix. Cf. also S. Radhakrishnan, *Eastern Religions*, 124ff; K. Murthy, *Reason and Revelation*, 53ff; J. Gonda, *Les Religions, de l'Inde*, 1, Paris, 1962, 238ff.
46. Cf. S. Nikhilananda, *Hinduism*, 26.
47. ABA, 71.
48. ABA, 77; *ErSac*, 176.
49. Cf. *Quest*, 186. See 183-7; Monchanin, *De l'Esthétique à la Mystique*, Casterman, 1967, 123-7; SPAA, 90-92; "Apophatism et Apavada", in *Entretiens* 1955, Pondicherry, 1956, 23-34.
50. *Quest*, 184.
51. St Gregory of Nazianzen, Hymn 287 "Hymnus ad Deum" (29), in Migne, P.G. vol. 37, 507. Translation, ABA, 26. See its profound similarity to *Katha Up.* 6, 12; *Mandukya Up.* 7; *Kena Up.* 1, 2f. It may be observed that the authorship of some of the hymns attributed to Gregory is questioned. J. Quasten, *Patrology*, III, *Spectrum*, 1960, p. 245, holds that 16 of the hymns in Migne P.G. vols. 37-38 are spurious or doubtful.
52. *Quest*, 185.
53. John of the Cross, *Complete Works* III Vols. Transl. by Allison Peers, London, 1953: *Spiritual Canticle*, 39, 4 (Peers II, 375); *Quest*, 185ff.
54. Cf. *Living Flame*, III, 41, 48, (Peers III, 75, 168).
55. *Living Flame*, 11, 28 (Peers 111, 49-50); Cf. also *Ascent of Mount Carmel* 1, 13, 11 (Peers 1, 59); 1, 4, 4, (Peers 1, 25); *Living Flame*, III, 29, (Peers I, 158).
56. *JM*, 57. Cf. also ABA, 22.
57. Monchanin, "In quo habitavit Omnis Plenitudo Divinitatis", in SPAA, 177-82, quote on 178. Further texts could be cited to show Monchanin's understanding of the centrality of Christ: *Temps*, 116-8; *Cont.* 27-8; "La Crise de l'espérance", in *Eglise Vivante* 1 (1949) 18-35, cf. 30. For the following paragraph, cf. SPAA, 177ff.
58. ABA, 37; For the following paragraphs, cf. Monchanin, "Hindouisme", in *Bdcs JB*, 6 (1965-6), 250; "Hindouisme", in *Bulletin*

des Facultés Catholiques de Lyon Jul.-Dec. 1946, 26-41; *Cont.* 26; 29; *ES*, 29.

59. Cf. *Cont.* 26. This approach from the interior to the exterior is not exclusive, and he is aware of the *per visibilia ad invisibilia* cf. *ES*, 42; 129. Cf. Samuel Rayan, "An Indian Christology: a discussion of method," in *Jeevadhara* 1, (1971) 212-27, esp. 219-20, where he argues that an Indian Christology must begin with the "indwelling Christ" leading finally to the historical Jesus (this, however, is only one of his considerations).
60. For this section, cf. *Cont.* 23ff. "Trinité, Essai à partir du Personnalisme", in *JM*, 192-3; "Théologie et Mystique du Saint-Esprit", in *Dieu Vivant* 23 (1953) 69-76; *Temps*, 119.
61. Denis of Alexandria in reply to a letter of Denis of Rome, cf. *JM*, 192.
62. Cf. *Cont.* 26. For the following paragraph, cf. *ES*, 152ff; *Cont.* 27; K. Rahner, "Person", in *Theological Dictionary*, Herder, 1965, 351-4; "Trinity", *ib.*, 469-73; *The Trinity*, London, 1969, 103ff.
63. Cf. Monchanin, *Apophatisme et Apavada*, 33-4; E. Schiltbeeckx, *Révélation et théologie*, Brussels 1965, 364-5; "...The human person is essentially oriented towards meeting other persons and cannot fully possess itself, except in the act wherein it gives itself to another..." Yet a certain ontological self-possession is presupposed for the self-gift, cf. *JM*, "Giving presupposes being", 192.
64. Cf. *ES*, 154. "Creation has being only through a relation of absolute dependence on the Trinity, a relation which is timeless on God's part, and time-bound on the part of the creature", *ibid.* Cf. further, *ES*, 152ff; *Cont.* 27.
65. Cf. *Théologie*, 72f; *Cont.* 26ff; *ES*, 131.
66. *Théologie*, 71ff. Cf. also on the point that the Spirit makes the unity in the Trinity, St Augustine in Migne *PL*, 42, 927-8. We may also speak of a "paracletopleroma" in the sense of a "personal integration into the Holy Spirit of every person united to all other persons. This integration prolongs and fulfils the personal integration into Christ of every person united to other persons". *Théologie*, 75. St Thomas, *Summa Theol.* 1, 37. 1.
67. Cf. for this section, *Cont.* 29ff; 37ff; Monchanin, "Problèmes du Yoga Chrétien", (ed. by Suzanne Siaux) in *Axes* 8 (1969), 21-31; "Yoga et Hésychasme", in *Axes* 4 (1969), 13-21. We follow rather closely, *Cont.* 29ff.
68. Cf. *Cont.* 30. Cf. O. Lacombe, "La Mystique naturelle dans l'Inde" in *Revue thomiste*, 51 (1951) 134-49; "Un exemple de mystique naturelle: L'Inde", in *Etudes Carmélitaines* 23 (1938) 2, 140-51.
69. There is self-mastery on the physiological-psychological, and metaphysical levels: unity and totality. This interiority is constitutive of thought (interior to the thinker), of the self (interior to the self: coincidence of the *en-soi* and *pour-soi*), and of

being (there is no exteriority); outside of being is inexistence, outside of thought is unthinkable, and outside of self is pure extraposition. Cf. *Cont.* 38-40.

70. Cf. *Cont.* 30. Monchanin holds that the final stage of Yoga is an experience of pure existence; if the ontological love of God is accepted then authentic mystical gifts can be grafted on this "natural experience", "Problèmes du Yoga Chrétien", 26; "La Crise de l'espérance", 34. Monchanin bases himself on the articles of Lacombe referred to in note 68.
71. Cf. Monchanin, "Texte sur l'hindouisme", 250; "Spiritualité de l'Inde", 65; "Mystique comparée", *JM*, 160. Cf. *JM*, 159ff; John of the Cross, Peers, III, 75; 168.
72. Cf. *Cont.* 30. We may mention in passing that Monchanin reflected much on the question of the christianisation of Yoga, and believed that, if it were not christianised something essential to India would remain outside the *Pleroma* of the mystical Body. Cf. "Problèmes du Yoga Chrétien", 13ff; *Cont.* 27ff. He considers that the way the Adavita "uses" it by subordinating it to its own philosophy (the specific philosophy of the Samkhya-Yoga is opposed to that of Advaita) may be the way to its christianisation.
73. A letter of February, 1954, in *SPAA*, 221. He seems to speak here of the lower bhakti.
74. Letter of March, 1953, in *SPAA*, 210.
75. Cf. *ES*, 127.
76. Cf. Letter, Nov. 1953, in *SPAA*, 220.
77. Cf. *ABA*, 77ff; *ErSac*, 176ff; G. Gispert-Sauch: "Réflexion chrétienne sur le Saccidananda" in *Bdcs JB*. 7(1966-7) 68-80.
78. Cf. *Cont.* 33-4.
79. Bishop L. Raymond: "Abbé Jules Monchanin", in *Clergy Monthly Supplement* 6 (1962-63) 286-91, esp. 290-1.
80. *Quest.* 187.
81. *ABA*, 16-17.

CONCLUSION

HINDU-CHRISTIAN DIALOGUE AND THE FORMATION OF AN INDIAN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY

At the close of this study of a few catholic pioneers of a new attitude and approach to Hinduism. it remains for us to gather together some of the insights we have discovered in their writings.¹ These may be of service to those who wish to continue the great work begun by these men, in a hindu-christian encounter and the formation of an Indian christian theology. The writings of these authors are necessarily time conditioned. They wrote in the context of a theology which considered Hinduism and other non-christian religions as 'natural religions', yet as we shall see in a moment they go beyond the theology of their time and invite us to go beyond the theology of our own day.

1. *Christ the fulfilment*

Nearly fifty years before J.N. Farquhar wrote his *The Crown of Hinduism* (1913) and Bernard Lucas his *Shall We Proselytise Hindus or Evangelise India?* (1914) Keshab Chandra Sen spoke of Christ as the fulfilment of Hinduism. But only in the beginning of this century did the fulfilment theory become popular. Johanns held that the spiritual and philosophical insights of Hinduism find fulfilment in Christ. According to him, it is at the summit of hindu philosophy that the light of Christ seems to shine. Zaehner adds a further note. He shows that the aspirations of Hinduism for a personal God with whom loving union is possible is fulfilled in Christ and in the Church. The desire of the bhakta to "enter into the Lord" and without losing his identity to become one with Him is realised in the Church when one is baptised into the death and resurrection of the Lord and becomes his living member, one with Him yet remaining distinct. Monchanin considers the missionary activity of the Church as making visible the invisible presence and action of Christ in Hinduism and in other religions. Yet the fulness Christianity brings implies not merely an unveiling of what was already there but a bringing into fulfilment beyond expectation, in the mystery of the holy Trinity, of all the desires, all the hopes and all God's gifts. The oscillation

between the personal and the impersonal, the One and the many can be solved only in the mystery of the Trinity where the One calls for the Three and the Three for the One, where the perfection of personality is in giving and in being total gift. Besides, Christ in whom dwells the "fulness of the Godhead bodily" is the revelation of God the invisible and unmanifest, the *saguna* and *nirguna* in one person. Cuttat's insight is very similar to that of Monchanin. He holds, besides, that in the Hypostatic Union of the Word Incarnate all the antinomies of hindu spirituality are 'resolved'.

Lacombe envisages his approach to Hinduism from the point of view of its contribution to Christianity and to universal culture, as a whole. Cuttat speaks of the complementarity of the two religions and he sees the encounter with Hinduism as valuable to the christian for deepening his understanding of and commitment to Christ. Only in the perspective of a 'mutual fulfilment' can we understand the 'fruit' of dialogue emphasised by our authors. Unless the Church integrates the values which God has placed in Hinduism she has no chance of survival, says Zaehner. Hence we can conclude that, while all begin with the theory of fulfilment, the aspect of mutual fulfilment is not altogether absent in their writings; some go even beyond the idea of a fulfilment by affirming the presence of Christ in Hinduism, as does Monchanin.

It has become almost commonplace today to say that the 'fulfilment theory' is one-sided and outdated in so far as "it considers Hinduism only as a human quest to be fulfilled by Christianity and not as already containing a divine response however incomplete".² R. Schlette goes to the extent of saying that "to admit...that the religions in their history tend towards Christ seems to contradict the facts furnished by the history of religions—with the exception of isolated phenomena".³ If the fulfilment theory means considering other religions merely as a human quest for God to be fulfilled by Christianity, then obviously we may not speak in terms of fulfilment. However, it seems to us that the term can be used provided we make it clear that other religions are not merely the "work of human hands" without a positive intervention of God. Even the sublime concept of God as *Saccidānanda* needs to find its fulfilment in the full revelation of the Trinity.

While it is still justified to talk of fulfilment we may ask whether we can not altogether prescind from the idea of a fulfil-

ment since the fulfilment in Christ and in the Kingdom is to happen not necessarily in history but at the end of time. The central concern of Jesus was the Kingdom; His preaching was to announce it as already present and to be realised at the end of time. All religions including the christian Church are to find their fulfilment in this Kingdom. The Church is at the service of it just as Christ was at the service of His Father. The criterion of belongingness to this Kingdom is not affiliation to this or that religion but love (*Matt. 25*). In the past one looked at fulfilment from the point of view of the Church; today we are aware that the Church is essentially of the present, provisional, whereas the Kingdom is of the future (though it has broken into the present), it is definitive and everlasting and is the central reality in God's plan of salvation. This Kingdom is achieved not by man but by God's act and its time and manner are known only to God. Christ Himself will deliver the Kingdom to His Father (*I Cor 15.24*) at the end when all the enemies are overcome. The Church is instrumental in bringing about the rule of love, by freeing man from all selfishness and all types of bondages. Hence what is required of us is that, in the footsteps of the Master we leave all else to the Father and just devote ourselves wholeheartedly to the humble service of humanity. We must remain humble servants of the Servant of God liberating man from all bondages and assuring hope and life in a world of fear, anxiety and death, and thus work to bring about the Kingdom of God in the hearts of men. Hence we may rightly prescind from the question of fulfilment.

2. *The Example of the Fathers of the Church*

The early Church had to face the immense problem of understanding and expressing the message of salvation in Christ in the cultural and religious milieu in which she found herself. Christ announced the saving message using parables and terms which his hearers could understand. With His death and resurrection the Church saw the newness of His message and was faced with the problem of finding a formulation for it. She had to use a language that could be understood also by the 'Gentiles' of the graeco-roman world. The Gospel message was in a way 'translated' into the Greek way of life and thought. As Zaehner says the Hebrew religion and Greek philosophy met and have never parted company. But Greek philosophy had to be puri-

fied, transformed and adjusted to carry the transcendent message of God's saving action in Christ. The Fathers were sympathetic but not syncretistic, uncompromising in their rejection of the practices and rites of the religions but bold in welcoming whatever they found useful as a channel for the expression of the christian message. They considered Greek philosophies as stepping stones to Christianity. They recognised the presence of the Word in other religions but did not deny the need of conversion of these religious men to Christ. St Thomas did not merely adapt Greek thought but infused into the materials he found in Greek philosophies a new thought-form. "When lived christian faith comes to real grips with any thought-tradition, and tries to understand the relevance of faith within that tradition and the tradition's implications for faith, it will necessarily happen that the understanding of being and of man immanent in that thought-tradition will get a new depth or even be radically changed from inside. At the same time we will discover new depths, new aspects in the actual living and formulation of our faith. Only thus a new christian theology can be born".⁴ Following the principle of Thomas it is necessary for the Church today to assimilate whatever is "digestible in the oriental religions to the christian constitution". The best of all the systems should be taken up in a christian synthesis. A conclusion which imposes itself upon us is that we must study the Fathers not to find support for our theories, as some have done in the past (some have found only positive elements; some only negative elements) but to find out exactly what they have said. We need to exercise a great deal of discrimination and discernment in the assimilation and adoption of practices and ideas from other religions.

3. *Knowledge of India and Hinduism*

Both for a religious dialogue and for the formation of an Indian christian theology the need of a thorough grasp of India in its present situation and of Hinduism (and of other religions, obviously) cannot be exaggerated. Limiting ourselves to Hinduism, we may say that not merely the classical Hinduism of the Vedas, Upanishads, Epics and the Gita, with which our authors were busy, but also with the Puranas, the festivals, popular rites, ceremonies and customs and modern Hinduism with all its branches need to be known. Nor is a theoretical or bookish knowledge sufficient. Following the example of men like Monchanin and

Abhishiktananda a christian must enter into the hindu religious experience through meditation of the hindu scriptures and a way of life which is deeply rooted in the Indian culture. Without an experiential knowledge of Hinduism we cannot claim to know Hinduism and hindus.

In this context it is necessary to note the importance to be given to monasticism and mysticism as advocated by Monchanin. The monk by accepting the absolute primacy of God in his life and by trying to respond totally to the call of God according to his charism, builds up the body of Christ and realises in himself the inner reality of the Church. The 'assumption' of the hindu sannyasa tradition and the dedication of the monk to the search of the Absolute beyond name and form will bring about the meeting of India and Christ "in the meditating heart of the monk", as Monchanin held. One may not be able to classify and 'understand' the hindu mysticism, yet one cannot exaggerate the need of a thorough study of the writings of christian and hindu mystics for a fruitful encounter between these religions.

However, this study of classical Hinduism and the ways of spirituality and monasticism is not enough. The modern hindu quest also needs to be taken into account by the christian. From the time of Raja Ram Mohan Roy a considerable amount of re-interpretation of classical Hinduism has been and is being done. If until today the hindu groaned under the weight of the unbreakable chain of endless deaths and re-births, the modern hindu is freeing himself from these shackles. He is now concerned with nation-building, with life and action and a prosperous future here on earth; social and political growth are his main interest; love and social concern are preached as the essence of religion; the old concepts of *māyā* and *samsāra* are being re-interpreted to harmonise with the nation's aspirations for growth and expansion. Unselfish action is presented as the main teaching of the Gita. It is precisely to this new India with all its problems that Christ comes as the true fulfilment of men's aspirations. In the nation's hopes for liberation from the selfishness that leads to corruption and perversion Christ comes as a liberator who changes the hearts of men. In the Old Testament Yahweh manifested himself as a political liberator; but a liberation which had more than a temporal and earthly significance. So too Christ preached and effected a liberation of man (Lk. 4. 18f) and was the saviour of the whole man. Today in India, a

new Indian theology should present Christ as the liberator, fulfiller of man's hopes and aspirations, and the existential situation of India needs to be taken more seriously than has been done in the past.

4. *A deep christian commitment*

Authenticity of life is a condition both for dialogue and for an Indian theology. A christian ought to accept humbly to be the messenger and servant of the Lord Jesus who has primacy over all and who announces a message of salvation for all. While reacting against the old triumphalism of the Church, a christian need not feel ashamed of announcing the uniqueness of Christ and the unique mission that the Church has in the world in bringing about the Kingdom. Along with this conviction, what is required is a genuine christian life. The encounter with Hinduism will certainly deepen the commitment of the christian. He has to be "*present* amongst the people, with a presence willed and intended as a witness of the love of Christ".⁵ Charity and holiness is a language which the hindu can understand: love possesses unsuspected possibilities of encounter in depth. If we are to meet the hindu in terms of holiness we must give a more constant and recognizable response not only as individual christians but as a Church to the call to be more 'spiritual'. It is fortunate that from the time of the All India Seminar there is a marked emphasis on spiritual life, on the life of prayer and contemplation. The witness of a life lived in the Spirit of Christ and radiating divine life and love, is the greatest proclamation of the message of the Gospel: a duty incumbent on every christian.

5. *The 'Incarnation' of the Church in India*

Taking our cue from Cuttat we may say that unless the Church is truly incarnate in India, in the present situation of the country, her theology and the possibility of meeting the contemporary man will be minimal. Just as Christ became man, became similar to man in all things except sin, lived and grew up among men, so too the Church has to be born again, and grow "in wisdom and in favour with God and men" (*Lk. 2.52*). She may have to give up some of the customs, practices and formulations she has got used to through the centuries and undergo a death experience in order to be born again. The christian, especially the theologian who through reading, medita-

tion and assimilation of the hindu scriptures perceives their relevance for the christian message will be better able to give expression to his Christ experience in this newly acquired background. His theology will not be any existing christian theological system in vedantic garb, for as Monchanin says, in our hindu-christian encounter we do not take with us anything but the kernel of the christian message. The kernel of the christian message and the élan of hindu spirituality must be made to meet one another. A theologian will allow this kernel to take deep root in him. His inner transformation and his dedication to Christ is essential; he is to be steeped in the tradition of the Church, the development of her dogmas and the history of her spirituality. Along with this, as we mentioned above, he must acquire a deep experiential knowledge of Hinduism. Given these two prerequisites, prayerfully living the double heritage, the theologian looks not to any systems but to Christ, to the Bible and to the other Scriptures and to the man of today in his concrete situation. Then, to use the words of the Second Vatican Council,

Particular traditions, together with the individual Patrimony of each family of nations, can be illumined by the light of the Gospel, and then be taken up into Catholic unity...the individual young Churches, adorned with their traditions, will have their own place in the ecclesiastical communion...(Decree on the Missionary Activity, 22)

So far the Indian Church has received from other Churches; now it is her turn to contribute to the growth of the other Churches. The most apt response to the European Churches whose contribution to the Indian Church we have studied is to make a contribution to the universal Church and to the European Churches in particular. Her contribution will be primarily in the sphere of prayer and contemplation. The place the Indian Church is to have in the universal Church is to be her 'contemplative heart', as Monchanin says. In this process, however, an attitude of impatience or human prudence will be of no avail, but only unconditional faith in the Spirit who leads us to the unknown promised land can help us in this adventure of faith.

6. *Plurality of theologies, and methods of approach*

Our authors would agree that we cannot speak of one Indian

christian theology, nor of a one and only approach to Hinduism. We saw that each of them has an approach of his own, quite different from the others. Each approach has its own limitations and values. So too a new Indian theology cannot be a ready-made theology for the whole of India, but "each of us should rather learn to hold himself at the disposal of the Spirit in a situation of tension and dialogue, seeking to understand, to re-interpret and reword the Christ-reality as called for by concrete experiences and encounters. Thus an Indian Christology will always be a process, and interpreting Christ to India will be a common task shared by, say, the hindu, the christian and the Church."⁶

In conclusion we may say that the Church as the sacrament of the unity established by Christ is not limited to any one time or place. She transcends all cultures, races, political structures and social systems. She is not a culture, nor a civilisation but the bearer of the Saving Word who is alien to no one, to no culture but is in all and all in Him. While she transcends every culture she is to incarnate herself truly in each. She takes all peoples as they are, fosters what is good in them, purifies, strengthens, elevates and ennobles them and makes them and their individual religious cultures witnesses to Christ's saving message. This is borne out by her history when she was enriched by various cultures and religious values, when she expressed her message in various philosophies. She has to continue this work of leading all back to the Source and as the sacrament of Christ remain in a recognizable form in every culture and people. The variety of theological and liturgical expressions to be found in diverse cultures adds to her comeliness. The task ahead is immense, but it need not discourage us. In earlier days the Church was faced with equally hard tasks with much less equipment, but she was confidently trustful in the Spirit and His guidance. Hence it is that holiness of life and genuine christian charity are insisted on. It is certainly consoling that the Church in India is giving great emphasis to contemplation and the life of prayer. In India more than elsewhere what is needed is a 'contemplative' 'mystical' theology, a theology of the rishis, of the seers. Hence we can neglect neither study nor contemplation, neither the past nor the present; a healthy tension between these is necessary. The authors we have studied can be an inspiration to us in this task. They have shown that Hinduism possesses pearls of in-

comparable beauty which the Church must work to make her own. They have indicated this objective and some of the means for attaining it and deserve nothing but gratitude and credit for what they have done.

FOOT NOTES

1. For a complete Indian christian theology we cannot neglect the other religions of India, but as our concern was only with hinduism, we limit ourselves to it here.
2. J. Dupuis, "The Presence of Christ in Hinduism", in *Religion and Society*, XVIII (1971) 1, 36.
3. R.H. Schlette, in *Encyclopédie de la Foi*, IV, Paris, 1967, 67-68.
4. Puthiyadam, "Thought Form", in *Indian Ecclesiastical Studies*, 12 (1973), 135.
5. R. Voillaume, *Seeds of the Desert*, London, 1955, 17.
6. Samuel Rayan, "Interpreting Christ: the contribution of Roman Catholic Seminaries" in *Indian Journal of Theology*, 23 (1974), 230. See also, "An Indian Christology: a discussion of Method", in *Jeevadhara*, I (1971) 3, 212ff.

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